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SERMONS ON
MODERN SPIRITUALISM

THE DANGERS OF SPIRITUALISM

BY

J. GODFREY RAUPERT

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The Dangers of Spiritualism, by J. Godfrey Raupert, is a very remarkable book. . . . Mr. Raupert's first-hand stories are horrible and convincing, and his conclusions, for the most part, overwhelming. Briefly, his evidence goes far to show that the 'subliminal self' theory is quite inadequate to observed phenomena, and that these can only be accounted for by the action of discarnate beings upon persons still living upon earth, an action which sooner or later culminates in disastrous injury to the inquirer. . . . It is difficult to imagine a little book of its size to put into the hands of any one who is beginning to dabble in this fascinating aspect of the spiritual world and to incur its dangers.—*Dublin Review*, July 1906.

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SERMONS ON
Modern Spiritualism

BY

A. V. MILLER, O.S.C.
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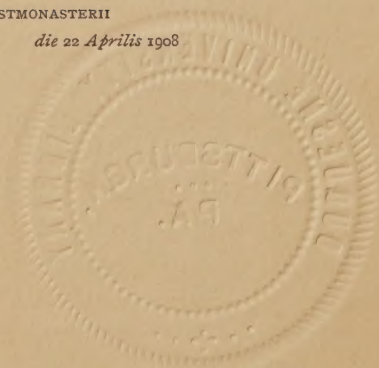
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die 22 Aprilis 1908



PREFATORY NOTICE

WHEN these sermons were being prepared I had no idea that they would ever be printed. The interest with which they were received, and the amount of attention they attracted, were quite unexpected. When they were completed, so many requests for their publication were made, that it seemed advisable to have them printed. By this means they will appeal to a larger number of persons. This seems desirable, because communications have reached me by post from many quarters, and from great distances, whither the sermons had been carried by the newspaper reports, showing how very widespread must be the interest which is taken in the subject of Spiritualism. If these sermons will be of use in warning Christians against having anything to do with this evocation of Spirits I shall be deeply grateful.

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Besides the communications which have reached me through the post, I have received many visits from persons who have in various ways come across Spiritualism both in England and abroad. These visits interested me very much because I added considerably to my knowledge of facts, and also because my visitors, one and all, declared that they thought I had rather understated the case against Spiritualism than otherwise, especially in reference to the consequences, viz. of Obsession, Possession, and Madness. I mention this because it will be to my readers a confirmation of what, to many of them, may be new and strange.

I must add one word to those who heard the sermons preached : for having heard only five sermons, they may be surprised to find that six are printed. The fact is that there were six originally planned, but in the course of delivering them, fearing lest I might be tedious and wearisome to my hearers, I shortened them and reduced them to five.

There is not the same difficulty about printing them, because the reader has the advantage over the listener, since, if wearied, he can lay

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down the book, whereas it is not so easy for the wearied listener to leave the church.

I would like to add a word of explanation with regard to a passage on page 152, in which occur the words that 'a fundamental fact in Evolution is, that God is eliminated from this physical world. The evolutionist will not give a place to God in the material universe.' When making that statement it never occurred to me that it would be understood universally of all who believe in Evolution. It is, of course, well known that many believers in Evolution are believers in God as Creator and Maintainer. To such my words do not apply. But lest they should give offence to these believers, I wish to state that they apply only to what I may call advanced evolutionists, who doubtless would readily accept my words as true.

ALEX. V. MILLER,
ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS,
BAYSWATER.

Good Friday 1908.

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Jon. E. Russell
12 116. 08.
SERMON I

‘God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by His Son.’—
HEBREWS i. 1, 2.

‘Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching . . . for instruction in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work.’—
2 TIM. iii. 16.

‘If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . from such withdraw thyself.’—1 TIM. vi. 3.

It is the clear duty of pastors to protect their flocks against the inroads of enemies and foes, who enter the fold for no other reason than to rend and tear the sheep. Spiritual pastors likewise must watch over the faithful committed to their care, to warn them and protect them, as far as possible, from dangers threatening their faith, and consequently their spiritual life. This duty is all the more imperative when the danger that threatens is of an insidious nature. A danger is especially insidious when, like a wolf in sheep’s clothing, it comes under the aspect of piety and holiness. A false doctrine is more deceptive when it makes

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pretence of teaching, with greater certainty, truths concerning God, or when it promises to lead us more quickly to God, and to establish us in closer and more intimate union with Him. By such the unwary are caught and led astray. Such is the danger presented to the Christian by the system of doctrine and practices generally known by the name of Spiritualism.

Any one who keeps himself informed of the movements that are taking place around him at the present time cannot help but be acquainted with the fact that Spiritualism is growing apace, is spreading to every corner of the world, and is daily gathering in great numbers of disciples. This in itself would be sufficient reason for the pastors of the faithful to raise a warning voice. It is but very lately that we have come across an instance of some of the worst and most distressing results of this insidious evil in this very parish. While the danger seemed to be no more than distant, there was no need perhaps to disturb you with uncalled-for warnings, but when it is close at hand, and, indeed, is even invading this little flock, the time for silence is past ; and the evil must be spoken of plainly, so that you may not be taken unawares, and become entangled in fatal errors, even before you realise that

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they are errors. I have been told to perform that duty. I need say no more by way of introducing the subject of these instructions or myself as giving them.

It will be useful to state, at the outset, in very few words, the object I have in view in giving these instructions. Let it then be understood that I consider myself to be addressing Catholics, and perhaps some non-Catholics who are yet believers in Christianity.

By Christianity I understand that historical, traditional Christianity which has been universally accepted and received for two thousand years. This historical, traditional Christianity includes explicit belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the docile acceptance of all His teaching, above all of the resurrection of the real material body, which, together with our souls, forms one single personality. Then, comparing this Christianity with Spiritualism, I shall hope to show you that there exists between them the opposition of contradiction, so that they are utterly irreconcilable with one another. From this mutual opposition, it follows that to be a Christian, and at the same time to be a Spiritualist, is a matter of impossibility.

I cannot imagine that Spiritualists would

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find fault with this position which I have taken up, because they loudly proclaim against this historical, traditional Christianity which is so dear to us.

One difficulty in the way of speaking of the evil of Spiritualism, and my object will be to show you how great an evil it is, is that by some its very existence is not only not recognised, but even denied. There are some persons who, assuming a position of intellectual superiority, will tell all who assert that they have had spiritualistic experiences that they are suffering from some mental hallucination, if not from the more prosaic disturbance of indigestion. I think it is safe to say that these superior persons have never examined the abundant evidence upon which the existence of Spiritualism is known, although we may assume that they would admit that evidence is the one only road to certitude open to human reason. The number, however, of these is continually growing less, because facts are forcing themselves upon men's attention, and facts cannot be denied. We can therefore afford to neglect these individuals, since the abundant evidence that offers itself makes the position of the sceptic unscientific.

Again there are many who, because Spiritu-

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alism has been used by needy and unscrupulous men and women as a means of fraudulently obtaining money from the public, characterise the whole movement as nothing but fraud and trickery. These persons would not risk their reputation for consistency by using this form of argument in other departments of inquiry. There are, for instance, many quacks, but it does not follow that all doctors and surgeons are to be characterised as quacks : there are some fraudulent solicitors, may we argue from that fact that all solicitors are fraudulent ? There are many wicked men, but all are not wicked : there are many fallen angels, but all are not fallen. Yet this is the form of argument upon which we are asked to reject the enormous amount of evidence which exists to prove the existence and reality of Spiritualism, and which, I am convinced, is of such a character that it is an evil tending to the ruin of the souls of men.

I fear I must disappoint you, if you imagine that I am going to put before you the whole of the evidence upon which, if we are but reasonable, we must admit the existence of this evil in our midst. Considering the vast amount of this evidence that is to hand, and the short time at my disposal, it would be an

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impossibility to produce it. However, one point of supreme importance I will put before you. Until late years, trustworthy persons were not to be found who would undertake the serious examination of the phenomena that are offered by Spiritualism for our consideration. When I say this, you must understand me to mean, that there were not found persons who, by reason of their high position in the public estimation, were such as to inspire men with confidence in their testimony. Consequently, what was false and what was true, what was straightforward and honest, and what was false and dishonest, became so inextricably mixed up, that the whole was stamped in the public estimate as fraud and trickery, and therefore fell into discredit. Men, therefore, who valued their reputations, preferred not to be associated with Spiritualism, lest they also should fall into discredit. But of late years, men of the first rank in the scientific world, in England, throughout the Continent, and in America, have set themselves the task of examining all the evidence that Spiritualists can produce. It is impossible to do more than mention a few of these scientists who have not hesitated to inquire into the reality of the Spiritualistic facts and phenomena,

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rightly understanding that it is the duty of science to examine seriously any facts or phenomena which offer themselves for observation, notwithstanding the source whence they come.

The pioneer among these scientific inquirers in England was Professor Alfred Russel Wallace, who was virtually the author of the Evolution Theory. Whatever we may think of the Theory of Evolution, there can be no two opinions about Professor Wallace's power of accurate observance of facts, and that is the one point which concerns us now.

He has been followed by men of even greater reputation as scientists, as Sir Oliver Lodge, and Sir William Crookes, who enjoys a European fame among scientific men. In Ireland, we find Mr. W. F. Barrett, Professor of Experimental Physics in the University of Ireland, who says: 'What I am prepared to assert, from my own experience, is that neither hallucination, imposture, mal-observation, mis-description, nor any other well-recognised cause can account for the phenomena I have witnessed, and that the simplest explanation is the spirit hypothesis.' Many other competent observers in England could be enumerated who have given their testimony to the reality of the Spiritualistic phenomena.

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In France, we find testifying to the reality of the phenomena such a well-known scientist as Professor Charles Richet, as well as Camille Flammarion, Cæsar de Vesnue, and many others.

In Italy, we have such men as Lombroso, Morselli, Foà, Mosso, Patrizi, Schiaparelli, and many others, all of whom are professors in different Universities in Italy.

Many men of high standing and reputation in America could be named if time allowed.

We find therefore many men who, by reason of scientific training, are well known expert examiners of facts and phenomena. They have taken nothing for granted, nor accepted anything upon hearsay, and they have testified only to phenomena and facts of which they have had personal experience.

Seeing the bad repute in which Spiritualism lay, their first care has been to take precaution to exclude all possibility of fraud and trickery from the facts they were observing. Consequently every strictest test that human ingenuity and scientific training could suggest was adopted by them to eliminate the possibility of trickery.

The value of the testimony of these men is enhanced by the fact that they began this

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inquiry in a thoroughly sceptical frame of mind. I think I may say, that these scientific men were all thorough and declared Materialists. They believed not at all in the existence of Spirits, and they began their investigation with a full expectation that the whole system of Spiritualism would fall to pieces before their examination. The evidence was arrayed before them, and one by one they were conquered. The evidence was too plain and obvious, and like honest men they admit its reality and truth, even though the admission means the uprooting of the very foundation of their life's work. They announce that the old Materialism must be rejected ; that intelligences exist apart from matter ; that the intelligence or spirit does not die with the body, and that therefore there is a future life.

So far these eminent scientific men have acted honestly and bravely. They had much to fear. They had to fear ridicule from fellow scientists, and for a time they met with it ; but now the net result of their testimony to the reality of Spiritualistic phenomena is to draw the attention of great numbers of men, so that the multitudes that are joining the Spiritualistic camp are continually growing. The reason for this is not difficult to find. Spiritualism finds

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in the materialistic world a field ready for its operations.

Materialistic philosophy had, by means of books, newspapers, and general literature, so permeated society, that men and women had breathed in and assimilated its doctrines without heeding the fact that poison of a fatal nature was being administered to them. Under this teaching the minds of men had been gradually alienated from God—so far that they began to question the fact of God's administration of this world, and they ended by denying His existence. The poison of this teaching may have seemed harmless while it was being swallowed, and consequently was not detected, but soon its effects were felt. Having separated himself from God, and trying to walk alone in complete independence, man finds that there is some serious want in himself which he cannot supply. And the thinking man can see, that not only is it not well with the individual, but that society also is in a sorry plight. Selfishness rules in every direction, so that men seek each their own advantage, caring nothing for the interests and rights of others: the authority of God being ignored or denied, the authority of man is also set at defiance, which means that anarchy and Socialism come into

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power, and then the well-being of society is threatened to its very foundation. The poison of this materialistic philosophy which has entered into the minds of men, and thence into their practical lives, is that there is nothing beyond or behind the mere tangible and visible world. It has taught men that the spiritual human soul has been, and still is, a dream of the mystics; and that the existence of God, to whom all men are subject and responsible, is an invention of priest-craft, so as to keep a hold upon men's imaginations for its own selfish ends.

It was only a matter of time when the very nature of man must rebel against such a doctrine. 'Man,' says St. Augustine, 'was made by God for God.' God was the ultimate end and object for which man, body and soul, was created. That end and object enter into the very nature of man. When therefore his end and object are taken from him by this materialistic philosophy, he must necessarily feel that there is some want, some need, in his nature which remains unsatisfied. Thus man under this poisonous teaching became sick at heart. The future and the reward offered to him by this philosophy could not satisfy the desires and cravings which his nature felt.

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Philosophy told him that he must lead an honest, upright life, not for any motive of personal reward, but that he might do his proper share towards the well-being of the race in general; and the reward offered to him was that future generations would feel gratitude to all good men who had contributed to the welfare of the race; or if any one should have performed some great and remarkable service to the race, his reward will consist in his name being recorded in history, so that his fellow-men will revere his memory, though in no case would the recipients of these rewards be conscious of the fact. This philosophy may teach man that there is no such thing as a spiritual, human soul, and consequently that there is no hereafter in his existence, and that the phenomenon called death is the end of all things for him; but the very nature of man recoils from the thought. Man feels within himself a natural and overmastering craving for happiness, and seeing, as he must, the force and the universality of this craving, he cannot for long be persuaded that it exists in him in vain, and amounts only to a painful mockery. The object of existence put before him by materialistic philosophy, and the rewards offered to him as an inducement to perform

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unselfish actions, completely fail to satisfy his craving for happiness ; have left him empty-handed and sick at heart.

The natural instinct of man forces him, in spite of the assurances of philosophy, and so-called science, to hold that existence does not cease with this mortal life ; and he feels compelled to hold that this unconquerable craving for happiness, since it can find no sufficient satisfaction here, will be satisfied in a future life. Thus natural instinct draws men surely to reject the hopeless, impersonal future of Materialism, and in its place to accept the teaching that there is a future life. Unfortunately, man is in danger of falling into another and perhaps greater evil, for he is still under the domination of that much vaunted principle of the so-called Reformation, viz. private judgment. The main work of the Reformation was the casting off of all teaching authority. Every man was to judge for himself, and was to be a law to himself. Everything, and indeed especially the mysteries of religion, were to be subjected to private judgment. It mattered not how far these mysteries might be above man's natural powers, or how incapable he might be to know them without external help, the mind was to be emancipated from all

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teaching authority, each one was to work out his own knowledge of them, and the decisions arrived at were to be a law to each individual.

What would be thought of the little child entering a school and presuming to decide everything for himself, disregarding all the instruction that the master might give? And yet how infinitely less capable is the human mind of conceiving and understanding the mysteries of religion than the little child is of understanding its school lessons.

The result of this principle of private judgment, and of rejecting authority, can now be seen in the endless and confusing variety of doctrine, and the lawlessness of practice to be found outside the Catholic Church. Therefore if man, when sick at heart at the hopeless teaching of Materialism, and impelled by instinct towards sounder principles, had turned to authority to be taught, had he but listened to the Church, divinely authorised to teach, he would have learned from her God's revelation concerning the object of human existence, and would then have found, in the truth, the soothing of all his anxiety and confusing doubts, and the satisfaction of his heart's craving.

The enemy, however, who is for ever lurk-

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ing about the Lord's field, ready to sow error among the truth, cockle among the wheat, is prepared with a new snare. The old snare of Materialism, which has done infinite harm in its day, is now recognised, and consequently no longer serves its purpose; for man is forced by very nature to believe in a future life. The new snare laid for man is a wholly erroneous idea of that future life; so erroneous, indeed, that it will lead him as far away from the truth as the materialistic philosophy, against which nature and common sense rebel.

When men discovered that Materialism did not and could not satisfy the innate cravings of the human heart, and that nothing could satisfy them but a future immortal life, the question presented itself, 'Where can the knowledge of this future life be obtained?'

As it obviously cannot be a matter of personal experience, the knowledge sought must come from outside sources. The thought then is suggested to men that if communication can be opened up with the spirits of those who have gone over from this mortal life to life beyond the grave, from them the desired information could be obtained. Under this suggestion men argue that the spirits of the departed, who have actually entered into that life, must know more

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about it than those who still live in the body, and that through them they might obtain reliable knowledge of what awaits them beyond the grave, and thus learn what it so much concerns them to know.

This suggestion of the enemy has been largely accepted and acted upon : the result, however, has been disastrous, as I hope to show you. Disaster alone is what is to be expected. For when man ignores the teaching which God has given him, in the revelation He has made of Himself, and in his pride seeks his own means, and relies upon his own intellectual powers to discover truths concerning the future life, he is embarking upon a hopeless enterprise. What God has prepared for us in a future life no man can know, for such knowledge is wholly beyond the reach of the unaided intellect. ‘As it is written : That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him. *But to us God hath revealed them by His Spirit.* For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man that is in him? So the things also that are of God *no man knoweth, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of this world,*

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*but the Spirit that is of Goa; that we may know the things that are given from God.'*¹

Man has already had sad experience of this arrogance and pride. He has already made a similar mistake. It was when he refused all guidance, and relied upon his own unaided intellectual powers, that he invented this materialistic philosophy which has been so disastrous to the human race, and from which men are now turning with disgust. And having bought experience at so great a cost, it is wonderful that he should again repeat the same experiment. Again ignoring the authority and teaching of the Church, which alone can instruct him on the future life, he is starting upon another quest for the knowledge for which he feels such an unquenchable thirst, and again nothing but error awaits him. In the first quest he arrived at the denial of any future life, at the denial of anything that could survive the body, and at denial even of the existence of God, *i.e.* pure Atheism: now in this second quest he discovers a false life, which is death, and a false Christ, which is idolatry.

And in this quest man finds that after all he must seek some authority upon which to rely. The authority of the Church, reaching back

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9, *et seqq.*

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to the Apostles, and resting upon the sure basis of divine institution, is rejected ; and the authority that is accepted is that of spirits, whom he does not know and cannot identify, and of whose character the one only thing he knows for certain is that they are untruthful and therefore unreliable.

The name given to this new error, which is gaining such a hold on men as to seriously threaten the Christian Church, is Spiritualism. For the present I will define Spiritualism to you as it appears to, and is described by, Spiritualists themselves. As we proceed with these instructions, we may perhaps discover that Spiritualists are themselves greatly deceived, and that a very different description of their error is to be given. However, in the sense of the Spiritualists, it is the communication with, and consulting of, the spirits of the dead, with the object of obtaining knowledge of all kinds, but primarily knowledge of the future state of the human soul.

The immediate consideration of Spiritualism I must leave for the next instruction. But before ending this morning, allow me to say another word on the attitude of Christianity towards this error. Already I have spoken of those sceptics who persist in believing that

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there is nothing but fraud and trickery to be found in all the phenomena that are presented to sitters at a Spiritualistic séance. I do not condemn this scepticism ; though personally I consider that the evidence, as far as I know it, suffices to bring conviction of their reality to the mind ; and certainly the testimony of so many competent scientific investigators who have opportunities for observing these phenomena, and who testify with the utmost confidence to their reality, is a most reasonable basis upon which to believe. Even if I am mistaken in this, and the sceptics are right, my position would still remain unaltered. For argument's sake, I will accept the position of these sceptics, viz. that all the phenomena that occur at séances are produced by trickery, and are consequently fraudulent. Even if this position was demonstrated beyond all possible doubt, still it would be true to say that Spiritualism and Christianity are so essentially opposed that no one can be, at one and the same time, a Christian and a Spiritualist. It must be realised that independently of the phenomena, which seem to make the séance-room so great an attraction, Spiritualism has a code of doctrine and teaching which, as I hope to show you, is completely subversive and de-

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structive of every fundamental Christian teaching, so that even should we imagine that every Spiritualist is a rank impostor in putting forward these phenomena, we still must admit that his teaching is not a negligible thing, but is really a teaching which is fraught with fatal results to the religion into which we have been baptized.

I am not therefore going to insult the honesty of Spiritualists nor do violence to my own common sense by calling into question the existence of the phenomena, nor the reality of the spirit manifestations. To do so would be the easier task, but not the wiser. I admit the reality of the phenomena, and of spirit manifestations. I face the difficulties they present, and deal with them as the Christian principles I profess require. To deny or ignore a danger is to leave it unopposed, and to allow it to take so deep a root that it cannot afterwards be displaced. To deny the real danger of Spiritualism, and to ignore the harm it is doing, treating it as altogether negligible, would be much the same as sitting in a powder magazine smoking and persuading oneself that there is no danger.

The teaching, therefore, put forward by Spiritualism would alone suffice as an excuse, if excuse were needed, for my warning to you.

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I rely upon the words of St. Paul to the Galatians : ‘ I wonder that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel, which is not another, only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so now I say again : if any one preach to you a gospel besides that which you have received, let him be anathema. For I give you to understand, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it ; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.’¹

Now in the gospel preached by St. Paul, two things are absolutely essential and fundamental, viz. the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and the reality of the resurrection of the material body of Christ. But both of these truths are denied in this teaching of Spiritualism, and therefore theirs is another gospel, and consequently comes under the Anathema of St. Paul.

Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how Catholics, or Christian non-Catholics, can

¹ Galatians, i. 8, *seq.*

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remain in this sceptical position with regard to these Spiritualistic phenomena. As I hope to show you, Occultism, of which Spiritualism is but the latest development, is continuously condemned by God throughout the Bible, and forbidden to His people. On the other hand, the Catholic Church has never ceased throughout her long history to condemn Occultism in every form, and even in these our own days has condemned Spiritualism, as she has always condemned Occultism. Now Christians, who have implicit faith in the Bible as the inspired word of God, would hardly be prepared to assert that all these condemnations are uttered by God against an evil which has no real existence : nor would Catholics, who, besides believing in the divine authorship of the Bible, believe likewise that the Church is divinely established to teach and guide men, and is, according to the promises of Christ, always guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth, be prepared to say that in these condemnations she has been beating the air with meaningless words, and fighting against shadows ; and yet these conclusions are surely implied whenever Christians or Catholics refuse to accept as realities the existence of Spiritualism, and the phenomena that it displays.

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SERMON II

‘For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great wonders, inasmuch as to deceive (if possible) the elect.’—St. MATTHEW xxiv. 24.

‘Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared.’—1 TIM. iv. 1, 2.

I ASK you earnestly to keep in mind that I do not presume to judge any individual Spiritualist. That I dare not do, nor have I the remotest wish to judge. To judge is God’s office, and no one dares to assume it. It is God’s office, because it involves a knowledge which is wholly divine. It involves a knowledge of man’s inward convictions, and of the motives of his acts. These things are secrets of the human heart, and the secrets of the human heart are open to God alone. By reason of these convictions and motives man may be in good faith, however much his acts may vary from that which, to me, is the fixed standard of behaviour. I have the deepest respect for this good faith, and to every man

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I attribute good faith, until such time as he clearly proves, by his own account of himself, that he is not sincere. But the system to which a man gives his adherence is no secret of the heart. That has an objective reality quite apart from the personality of its adherent. That system, in its objective reality, I can examine, and I am justified in criticising it. In speaking therefore of Spiritualism, I am not criticising or judging the individual Spiritualist, and if I consider it my duty to make criticisms which appear to be severe, I beg you to understand that they are not levelled at any individual, but at the system, and I hope I shall say nothing that is not a strictly logical conclusion following from admitted facts.

Spiritualism, as described by Spiritualists, is a communication with and consulting of the spirits of the departed, with the object of obtaining knowledge of all kinds, but, primarily, of the future state of the human soul after death, as well as a knowledge of our duties and obligations during this life. This is the declared object which Spiritualists have in entering upon this communication, but whether they succeed, or whether they are not themselves deceived, will, I hope, be made clear as these instructions proceed.

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It is important to notice that Spiritualism, in its broadest sense, is as old, in all probability, as the human race.¹ Spiritualism is not new. It is but a specific form of a belief and practice which is, at least, as old as history. It is a specific form of a generic belief and practice, which is known as Occultism. At all times recorded in history men have in various manners busied themselves diving into the unseen world.²

There is, of course, a sense in which it is justifiable to seek a knowledge of the unseen world. The material world in which we live is intended to be to us a clear indication and proof of the existence of the unseen world. 'For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also, and divinity; so that they are inexcusable.'³ Moreover it is justifiable to communicate with the spirits in this unseen

¹ Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, ch. iv.: 'Our own time has revived a group of beliefs and practices which have their roots deep in the very stratum of early philosophy, where witchcraft makes its first appearance. This group of beliefs and practices constitutes what is now known as Spiritualism.'

² J. F. Collingwood, F.G.S., *Limits Proper to Modern Spiritualism*: 'Spiritualism, which dates from the dawn of history, has engaged the minds of the greatest among men through the ages.'

³ Rom. i. 20.

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world. Every Christian declares in his creed his belief in the Communion of Saints, whereby he asserts the existence of communion between himself and the Angels and all the spirits of his fellow-members in the Church. These, he believes, take an interest in his welfare during the struggle he must sustain against moral foes during this mortal life, and he believes that they are able and ready, under God's permission, to help him by their intercession and influence. But under no circumstance does the Christian communicate with them as the source of his knowledge of God, and of his duties and obligation towards God. God Himself has at all times vouchsafed to speak to man and reveal Himself to His creatures. To set aside and ignore this revelation, and appeal to spirits to teach us, is a distinct contempt of God's goodness, which will be punished by our impious efforts landing us into error instead of truth.

I do not think that Spiritualists would object to their belief and practices being classed under the more general title of Occultism. They not unfrequently assume to themselves the designation 'Occultists,' and the word 'Occult' is to be seen in the title of some of their more important journals.

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This Occultism, or communication with spirits, is mentioned in the earliest books of Scripture. It is likewise emphatically condemned, and in such a way as to show that it was at that time an established, well-rooted fact. Consequently we may very fairly conclude that at the time of this earliest mention it was already a thing of ancient origin.

The first mention we have of this is in the book of Leviticus. Moses had led the Children of Israel out of Egypt, and through all their wanderings in the Wilderness, and they were about to enter into the land of Palestine, the land God had promised them as their possession. Palestine was already occupied by nations which had completely fallen away from the knowledge of the true God, and were practising the most degraded and revolting forms of idolatry. It was a country evidently under the sway of Satan. Therefore Moses warned the Israelites beforehand, telling them that they would find the nations given up to soothsayers, diviners, fortune-tellers and magicians.

These soothsayers and magicians were the recognised intermediaries between men and the spirits. Against these God's hatred was expressed by Moses, as also the punishment God would inflict upon the Israelites, if they allowed

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themselves to be drawn into the same practices, when they took possession of the land. 'The soul that shall go aside after magicians and soothsayers . . . I will set my face against that soul and destroy it out of the midst of the people.'¹

Later² in the history of the people of Israel it is made clear to us that this evil of soothsayers and magicians had by no means been extirpated. The nations which had previously possessed the land had not been destroyed, as God had commanded, and so they remained and more or less mingled with the chosen people to their great hurt and detriment. These pagan, idolatrous nations still practised their black arts of Occultism, and the Israelites became victims to this danger against which Moses had so solemnly warned them. Saul, the first King of Israel, while yet he was faithful to God, waged war against these soothsayers and magicians so fiercely that it became a most dangerous profession, and could only be carried on under the greatest secrecy. In later years, when Saul no longer walked in the way of the Lord, and consequently fell into great difficulty and danger, feeling that God had deserted him, and wanting much to know

¹ Leviticus xx. 6.

² 1st Book of Kings xxviii.

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what the future had in store for him, he be-
thought himself of consulting a soothsayer who
would obtain this knowledge for him from the
spirits of the dead. He had, however, acted
with such severity towards soothsayers in former
years, for he had 'rooted them out of the
land,' that it was with the greatest difficulty
one could be found. At length one was dis-
covered by the servants of Saul, and she is
styled the 'witch of Endor.' At Saul's prayer
she summoned the spirit of Samuel, the High
Priest, who had anointed Saul king, and who
had died not long before. It seems clear that
the spirit of Samuel answered this summons
by the special will of God rather than by the
force of this woman's incantations, for there was
brought to Saul from God a serious message
concerning the ruin of his kingship, because of
his infidelity. This instance interests us, not
only in showing us how persistently this evil
practice existed, but also because, in its circum-
stances, it so clearly resembles what is daily
happening amongst us in this city of London.
The account of this event, occurring in the
First Book of Kings, seems wonderfully like the
descriptions of séances which can be read in
any of the weekly journals devoted to Spirit-
ualism. For this woman of Endor was the

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medium of communication, and it would seem as though the message was conveyed to Saul without his seeing Samuel.

Again, among the crimes of Manasses, King of Judah, it is recorded that 'he used divinations and observed omens, and appointed Pythons and multiplied soothsayers to do evil before the Lord and provoke Him.'¹

Again, Isaias, foretelling the punishment to fall upon the Egyptians, says : 'And they shall consult their idols and their diviners, and their wizards and their soothsayers, and I will deliver Egypt into the hands of cruel masters.'

Very many instances could be quoted of these practices existing, and of expressions of God's hatred of them, but I will content myself by referring, and in a very few words, to the mention of the subject to be found in the Acts of the Apostles.

In the eighth chapter there is mention of one Simon of Samaria, who was a magician, and had long bewitched the people of that city. He had apparently been converted, *i.e.* he must have been touched by grace, and had answered to the first call of grace, but his after-history shows that he had been but half converted, for he had not become wholly detached from his

¹ 4th Book of Kings xxi. 6.

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forbidden magic arts, or, as we might say, from his dealings with the spirit-world. By the agency of spirits he had worked wonders among the people, and we can easily understand that it was no small thing for him to lose the notoriety he had gained by his former practices. When he saw the wonders and miracles worked by St. Peter, and above all the wonders wrought by the Holy Spirit, whom St. Peter conferred upon the faithful, not recognising the working of the Holy Spirit, but confounding it with the working of his own black arts, he proposed to give Peter money that he might give him also this power of conferring the Holy Spirit.

The reproaches which St. Peter uttered against him for his blasphemous proposal seemed to have worked in him repentance for his sin, though later on we see in this Simon Magus an example of what is such a common experience nowadays, namely, the apparent impossibility of getting out of the slavery of these spirits once a man has committed himself to it; for, if we can trust contemporary history, this man returned once more to his spiritistic practices and continued in them to the end. Moreover, we know from mention made of him by the early Fathers that he troubled the early Church with his false and heretical teaching, in

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the same way that modern Spiritism troubles Christianity in these our days.

Again, in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts we read of another sorcerer, a Jew, Bar-jesu by name, which by interpretation was Elymas. This sorcerer was attached to the person of the pro-consul Sergius Paulus. This pro-consul doubtless was a well-meaning man, feeling in his soul the natural human yearning for the supernatural to fill the void, which, in the absence of faith, is so keenly experienced. We know from history, quite independently of the Bible, that at that time there were literally swarms of astrologers and soothsayers in the East, who claimed to belong to two distinct schools, viz. those who claimed to possess the powers of the ancient Magi of Persia, and those who formed a school at Cyprus. The latter was altogether Jewish. They claimed an origin from the Magi who strove against Moses before Pharaoh, and indeed from Moses himself. These men were full of promises to initiate their patrons in the deepest mysteries of life. Elymas was one of these, and into his hands had Sergius Paulus fallen. When Paul came to Cyprus, and was confirming his teaching by wonders and miracles, Sergius Paulus, led probably by curiosity, was eager to hear him and his disciples. He

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summoned them to his court that he might hear what Paul had to say. Elymas, or Barjesu, was in great alarm, and seeing that this would bring about his own ruin, at once set to work to prejudice the proconsul's mind against the Christian faith. Paul, fired with zeal for his Master's cause, seeing that Elymas was standing between the Roman governor seeking the truth and Jesus Christ, with the burning words of God's Spirit exposed the man for what he was. 'O man, full of all guile and all deceitfulness, child of the devil, foe of all righteousness, wilt thou never cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, nor shalt thou see the sun for a time. Forthwith there fell a mist and a darkness upon Elymas, and, turning from side to side, he groped for some one to lead him by the hand. At the sight of what had happened, the pro-consul believed, seized with admiration at the teachings of the Lord.'¹

The last instance I shall mention occurs in the following chapter of Acts. St. Paul and his missionary companions had reached Philippi in Macedonia, and among the first converts to Christianity were some women, whom he found

¹ Acts of Apostles, xiii. 6 *et seqq.*

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assembled at the place of prayer. The principal of these was Lydia of Thyatira, who invited the band of missionaries to lodge in her house. But as Paul was passing from the house of Lydia to the place of prayer, he was followed many days by a slave-girl possessed by a pythonical spirit. The remarkable qualities this woman possessed had induced several men, speculators, to buy her, because they saw that much profit could be made by using her powers among the superstitious pagans, and this profit they shared among them. Although she followed the Apostle and his companions, testifying to them as messengers from God, crying out, 'These men are servants of the most high God who preach unto you the way of salvation,' 'Paul, fearing that these praises on the part of a possessed creature might compromise the truth of the gospel, turned and faced her bidding the spirit that was tormenting her to depart : "I command thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, to go out of her."'¹

These dealings with spirits, to which Scripture testifies in an incidental manner, are spoken of by many independent contemporary pagan writers, and even by writers previous to the time of our Lord and the Apostles.

¹ Fouard, *St. Paul*.

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Enough has been said to show that Occultism, or seeking to gain knowledge of the unseen world by communication with spirits, is as old as history. This is, in fact, an ancient device of Satan to draw away souls from the truth revealed by God, and, as we shall see, it has always fallen under the condemnation of God. In these later days, it has taken on a new form, under which it may be imagined to be a complete novelty. It is, however, nothing more than the same ancient error clothed in a new garment. This modern form of the same evil, and of the same errors, has been recognised by the Church, and faithful to the commission given to her, to watch over the faith of her children, she has condemned it, and threatens to cut off from her communion those of her children who enter into this intercourse with the spirits.

The modern form of this spirit communication, which has received the name of Spiritualism, is comparatively of recent date. The exact date of its first appearance can be fixed with certainty. It arose in America, in the year 1847, just sixty years ago.

At that time there was at Arcadia, New York State, a family of the name of Fox, and in their house strange and incessant noises,

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knockings and rappings, were heard constantly day and night. It was noticed that this occurred especially when either of the two daughters of the house was present. After a little time it struck these young women that there might be some meaning in these strange noises, so they arranged a code of signs. They asked questions, and to their surprise they obtained by means of these pre-arranged signs intelligent answers. In this way it was discovered that, though invisible, there were present intelligent agents, and that it was possible to establish communication with them. The two daughters of the house appearing to have some peculiar power of carrying on this communication became mediums, and through them constant intercourse with these intelligent agents was established. After a short period these two mediums visited England, and naturally attracted a large amount of notice. From the time of their visit the movement called Spiritualism established itself here in England, and has undoubtedly struck deep roots.

In view of what I shall have to say later on, when we examine what must be our position as Catholics towards Spiritualism, it is important to say a few words about the mode of procedure in this communion with these unseen

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intelligences, and also about the phenomena which accompany the manifestations that these intelligences make.

The mode of procedure is this. There is always needed some person, known as the medium, through whom the inquirers are brought into contact with the unseen intelligences. Some of these mediums have been very notorious, but time does not at present allow me to speak of any of them individually. The medium holds a meeting of inquirers, usually called a 'Séance.' The séance is held in an ordinary room, partly darkened, though sufficiently lighted to allow the 'sitters' to see fairly well, and the medium generally retires into a cabinet or behind a screen. Both these circumstances obviously leave room for fraud and trickery. There can be no doubt that often fraud and trickery have been practised, and at one time or another many well-known mediums have been discovered in so acting. This fact has been taken hold of so strongly by many persons, that they will not allow that there is anything else but fraud in the whole system. Willing as one must be to admit that Spiritualistic séances have often been the occasions of fraud, still, as I have already pointed out, there is such an enormous

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mass of evidence in favour of the objective reality of these unseen intelligent agents, that it would be wholly unreasonable to reject Spiritualism as unworthy of notice. It is also of some importance to notice that this darkness and the cabinet is by no means a necessity. There is at this present time an extraordinary medium holding séances in Italy, who dispenses with both these precautions, and sits in the circle like an ordinary inquirer, while her hands are held by her neighbours sitting on her right and left. Even under those circumstances, the phenomena occur with perfect freedom.

As to the phenomena which occur at these séances it would be quite impossible to enumerate them within the scope of these instructions. The simplest and most elementary is what is known as table turning or table tipping. The inquirers sit round a table, with their hands upon it, each one touching his neighbour's hands. This is called a spiritistic chain. Soon the table may move, or rise from the ground, and raps may be heard, and thereby a code of signs may be arranged, and answers to questions received which are distinctly given by an intelligence. Sometimes messages

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are written by unseen hands, and occasionally in a language entirely unknown to the medium.

Again objects of great weight are lifted from the ground and moved about the room, while other objects of furniture which are quite light, as a chair, cannot be lifted or moved, being apparently rooted to the floor.

Glowing lights float about in the air, and although all windows and doors are shut a rushing air is observed, which, though felt by all present, does not disturb the lightest articles that may be in the room. The presence of the spirits is often made known by voices, which are recognised as identical with the voices of departed friends.

I must ask you to take special notice of a condition required of the sitters by the spirits. For successfully receiving communications the sitters must put themselves in a state of *passivity*, surrendering their minds to be acted upon by the spirits, and allowing them to impress their ideas and suggestions upon them, and receiving these suggestions without criticism. As this state is to be deliberately induced, it is clear that the sitter must surrender his will also. *Spirit Teaching*, page 43, says: 'The bodily conditions we seek for are

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passivity and quickness of receptivity.' So necessary are these 'bodily conditions' that the spirits not unfrequently declare that they cannot communicate freely because the minds of some of the sitters are opposed to them. I draw your notice to this 'condition' especially, because I consider that it opens the door to many of the most distressing evils attendant upon Spiritualism, and of which there will be much to be said later on.

But to return to my point, there are so many of these phenomena known to the séance room, indicating the presence of spirits, that it would be an impossible task to enumerate them now, but one I must mention before leaving this part of my subject because it is the most surprising of all. The spirits frequently materialise, *i.e.* they assume bodily shape and form, so as to become visible and tangible ; and this in different degrees. The 'materialisation' is at times very vague and indistinct. At other times it is much more distinct. It is indeed sometimes so complete that the spirits have every likeness to the bodies of mortal men. Their limbs can be handled, their bodily warmth distinctly felt, and even the breathing and the beating of the pulse and the heart are observable. These materialised spirits have

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frequently been photographed, some of which photographs I possess.

Facts and phenomena such as these have been submitted to the most searching examination, as I have shown, by scientists in every country in Europe and also in America. These men are witnesses who beyond all doubt inspire confidence. Their word is beyond all doubt, their honour is beyond all reproach. Their motive is the attainment of truth, and that they have given a sincere and truthful account of the result they have reached can surely be concluded from the fact that it is in direct contradiction to what they themselves expected and even desired, contradicting as it does the fundamental principles of their science, viz. Materialism.

It now becomes necessary to understand clearly what is the result reached by these competent scientific observers. It is simply this, that beyond all doubt there are behind all these phenomena *intelligent agents*. This is of course admitted even by the sceptic. The phenomena he witnesses he admits at once to be acts such as an intelligent agent only could perform, and he therefore attributes them to one or the other of the sitters, who according to him is committing a fraud upon all those

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present. The result, however, which these competent observers have reached is, that the intelligences behind these phenomena are undoubtedly apart and distinct from the intelligences of all the sitters. For in examining these phenomena they have applied every strictest test that human ingenuity and scientific training could devise to prevent any approach to fraud, and still in spite of all these tests the phenomena occur without hindrance.

Are we justified in accepting the testimony of these men as to the reality of these phenomena? Surely we are. To ask this is to make no greater demand than is made at all times with regard to other serious matters of life. If we refuse this testimony of competent men we must consistently refuse the testimony upon which by far the greater amount of our knowledge rests. We all have some little elementary knowledge of astronomy, and we make very confident statements about the movements of planets, and their distances from the earth, but not one in a thousand of us knows these things by direct knowledge but upon the testimony of those whom we know to be competent observers of the facts. The same can be said of every department of knowledge.

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But the testimony in this case is concerning agencies that are invisible. Is such testimony of any value? Certainly it is. To accept that is no more than we are doing every hour of the day. Has any one ever seen the soul of his neighbour? Has any one ever seen a human character? And yet what man hesitates to assert the existence of his neighbour's soul? And who is there who does not form his judgments concerning his neighbour's character? We assert the existence of such a soul because we see that our neighbour does acts which can be performed only by an intelligent and rational agent. In like manner, men form their judgments of character because they understand that the nature of the acts performed show the nature of the agent. Acting upon this principle, and accepting upon sufficient evidence the existence of these intelligences, resting as it does upon unimpeachable testimony, I proceed to consider the nature and character of these spirit manifestations, so as to perceive what our attitude as Christians and as Catholics should be towards them. The point to which the testimony of competent scientific observers has led us is, that the cause of these phenomena must necessarily be intelligences which are quite distinct from the intelligences of the

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sitters. Now, our object will be to see, if we can, to whom these intelligences belong.

I have said this much about the phenomena of the séance room, not because I place very great importance upon them, but because they are the fringe of the net which is set as a snare for unsuspecting victims. The thoroughgoing Spiritualist cares but little about these phenomena, and often looks upon them as hardly worth notice. He values that which lies behind them. The intelligent answers to his questions, the communications he receives are what he values. These are, of course, what we might call the proper acts of intelligent agents, and up to these communications the phenomena are intended to lead. It is the consideration of these answers and communications, these acts proper to these intelligent agents, which will afford us the materials for judging the nature and the character of the spirits which manifest in the séances. We know from their own statements what they pretend to be; it will be our object to decide whether they really are what they pretend. Moreover, I have spoken to some extent of the Spiritualistic phenomena, because they come under the condemnation of God and of His Church just as much as the communications made by the spirits.

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But lest any one should think that I am exaggerating or imagining evils where none exist, or giving to Spiritualism an importance which does not belong to it, I must say a few words about the extent to which this movement has attained, and the characteristics it is assuming in its latest development.

Spiritualism has been working for many years in a quiet, unostentatious manner, which constitutes one of its greatest dangers. There may be some of my hearers who remember these mediums first coming to England from America, and the immense amount of attention they drew to themselves, so that they were quite the wonder of their day because of the extreme novelty of their ideas and of their doings. Morning by morning the papers recorded their extraordinary proceedings, so that the subject became one of common conversation. Since then the novelty has passed away, and little is heard of Spiritualism in the ordinary press, and for that reason people are liable to think that common sense has in the end prevailed ; that Spiritualism is dying a natural death ; and that the little that is heard of it from time to time only indicates its last expiring efforts. As a matter of fact, a little attention and inquiry would show that Spiritualism

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is at this present time full of vitality and activity, and that its vigour and growth is daily increasing. Perhaps we Catholics hear less about it than non-Catholics. The practical Catholic feels that he possesses a religion which ministers to his spiritual wants so completely that no doubt arises in his mind as to his position, and that there is no need to seek beyond that which he possesses. Very often the non-Catholic does not feel this certainty and conviction. He does not find in his church any unity of teaching nor of practice. He does not see therein any governing authority competent to command obedience and submission, which an institution of divine origin ought necessarily to possess. He finds himself in the midst of confusion of teachings and of practices, and he has no authoritative, living voice to which to turn for the soothing of any doubt or the solution of any difficulty. And yet there is undoubtedly within him a yearning and craving for higher things. In seeking to satisfy this craving, not having the security of the Catholic Church to fly to, he is in great danger of falling victim to the snares of the Evil One, already spoken of, and therefore the non-Catholic is more exposed to false teaching than the Catholic. Nevertheless, there

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is always danger of unfervent and unwary Catholics being drawn into the meshes of this snare, and once within the snare either the fascination of imagining themselves to be in communication with the dead, or the relentless tyranny of the spirits, make it a matter of extreme difficulty to recover themselves. There is abundant evidence to hand that many Catholics are thus entrapped. Outside the Catholic Church Spiritualism is rampant, and that among all classes. It is not an uncommon amusement, as some people call it, in drawing-rooms to evoke the spirits, and to obtain answers to questions by rappings. I heard but a few weeks ago, from a priest coming from the North, that Spiritualism has taken a great hold upon the miners in our collieries.

Also I was told lately by one who had actual experience of the fact that, among the factory hands in the manufacturing towns of the Midlands, a great proportion are members of Spiritualistic circles, and that they spend several evenings in the week at their séances.

A visit to the central publishing office of Spiritualism here in London would at once show you what an extensive Spiritualistic litera-

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ture exists ; and that it is being added to daily. Moreover this literature is, for the most part, being sold at prices that put it within the reach of persons of the most moderate means.

The weekly publications devoted to this cause can be counted by the score in this country alone, and by hundreds throughout Europe and America.

In the advertisement columns of these periodicals are published every week lists of Spiritualistic centres in every town, and invitation is offered to all to be present. No mention, of course, is made of the numberless private circles of friends held in different families. I know of several circles in this very neighbourhood in which séances are held weekly, as a rule on Sundays, during the usual hours of divine service. In this quiet, unostentatious manner Spiritualism is forging ahead, so that although the beginning of this latest development dates back but sixty years, the latest computation of its members puts the number at not less than 20,000,000.

Except those who are deep in the movement, and those who have made a special study of Spiritualism, there are but few who understand and realise whither it is tending. For it is not generally understood that Spiritualism is a dis-

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tinct religion. The strange phenomena startled people by their novelty, and the novelty passing away, the general interest passed with it. During the years of its unostentatious existence it has been steadily evolving a code of distinct teaching or doctrine, and although busily denouncing all existing dogma, has become extremely dogmatic. The world has yet to realise that Spiritualism is a religion, and that it declares open war against the Christian Church. More than that, the world will soon have to open its eyes to the fact that Spiritualism has for its object the destruction of that ancient and venerable historic Christianity which has rescued the world from idolatry and has established it in Christian morality. Spiritualism is indeed the most insidious and most diabolical attack that has ever been made upon true religion. Heresies have arisen, and schisms have torn the Church, but although these have called in question certain particular doctrines, or have raised rebellion against the divine authority of the Church, they have at least retained the great bulk of Christian teaching, and that which has been retained has brought blessings to those who are in ignorance of better things, and has helped to maintain the great principles of morality. Spiritualism,

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however, has for its object to destroy Christianity root and branch, and thereby is destroying these principles which teach men self-control and self-restraint ; and consequently it is paving the way to the complete subversion of Christian morality.

It will be in place here to introduce to your notice the condemnation that has always been uttered against this dealing with the spirits of the dead. Such condemnation is to be found throughout the Scriptures, both in the Old and the New Testaments. Moreover, the Church has never ceased to raise her voice of warning against these beliefs and practices, and to impose her censures upon her children who should adopt them.

The denunciation which occurs in Deuteronomy xviii. 9-12 is very clear and emphatic. It was spoken by Moses to the Israelites when warning them of the dangers that would beset them, upon entering into possession of the Holy Land. ‘When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God shall give thee, beware lest thou have a mind to imitate the abominations of these nations. Neither let there be found among you any one that shall expiate his son or daughter making them pass through the fire : or that consulteth sooth-

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sayers, or observeth dreams or omens ; neither let there be any wizard nor any charmer, nor any one that consulteth pythonic spirits or fortune-tellers, or *that seeketh the truth from the dead*. For the Lord abhorreth all these things, and for these abominations He will destroy them at thy coming.’¹

This is confirmed in Leviticus. ‘The soul that shall go aside after magicians and sooth-sayers, I will set my face against that soul and destroy it out of the midst of the people.’² In the twenty-seventh verse of the same chapter occur the words : ‘A man or woman, in whom there is a pythonical or divining spirit, dying let them die ; they shall stone them : their blood be upon them.’

There are many places in the Old Testament in which reference is made to these practices and God’s displeasure and hatred of them is expressed.

The position taken by the Apostles, as shown in the Acts of the Apostles, towards the practices of Occultism has already been seen ; viz. in the cases of Simon Magus and St. Peter, of Elymas and St. Paul, and of the girl with the pythonical spirit. To these may be added the case of the Ephesians, to whom

¹ Deut. xviii. 9-12.

² Lev. xx. 6.

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St. Paul had preached the Gospel : ‘ And many of them who had followed curious arts brought together their books and burnt them before all ; and counting the price of them, they found the money to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and was confirmed.’¹ These examples show not only the existence of this system of inquiring into the unseen world in order to obtain knowledge and information hidden from us, but also that these practices were opposed to the Christian teaching of the Apostles, and were condemned by them.

The teaching of the Church has always been identical with the teaching of Scripture. Throughout the middle ages, when magic acts were greatly cultivated, numerous decrees and bulls were issued by the Popes condemning these practices as demoniacal.

There is a bull of John xxii. in the fourteenth century, which would perfectly well apply to the present day practices of which I speak. Therein he says : ‘ We sorrowfully perceive that very many are *Christians in name only*, for leaving the light of truth they have become obscured by so great a darkness of error that they even seek answers from the devil and receive them.’

¹ Acts xix. 19.

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Again, in 1856, questions were asked of the sacred Congregation of the Holy Office concerning the lawfulness of the Spiritualistic practices which were just newly introduced into Europe from America, and the answer given was: 'That to evoke the spirits of the dead, to receive answers from them, to seek knowledge of unknown facts or of things happening at a distance, and all superstitious practices of this kind is a deceit altogether unlawful and heretical, and a scandal against morality.'

Relying upon these authoritative utterances, theologians, when speaking of all the practices connected with Spiritualism, unhesitatingly express the opinion, that it is a grievous sin to seek from mediums the evocation of spirits, or to consult them concerning anything whatsoever.

We have another authoritative utterance by Leo XIII., in which he says, 'It is a sin to publish, read, or retain books which treat of inquiries into the future, magic, evoking of spirits and other superstitions of that kind.'

Nor let any one imagine that it is lawful to consult these mediums, or to take part in these séances, *even when you exclude from your mind the intention of dealing with the devil.* This very

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point was put forward in a question asked of the Congregation of the Holy Office. The answer was distinct and emphatic, 'It is not lawful.' This answer was solemnly approved by Leo XIII., April 1898.

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SERMON III

‘Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, if they be of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world. By this is the Spirit of God known. Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God : and every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God : and this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in the world.’—1 ST. JOHN iv. 1, *seqq.*

WE have seen that both Scripture and the Catholic Church alike condemn Spiritualism as unlawful. All Christians accept the authority of the Bible, and Catholics accept also the authority of the Church. The position therefore of both must be adverse to Spiritualism. I now proceed to examine the position that Spiritualists assume, and to examine whether it is a reasonable one. Then from a consideration of the acts of these spirits, and the results they produce upon men, we shall be able to form a judgment of their nature.

Spiritualists maintain that the intelligences with which they establish communication are the spirits of the dead, so that all the pheno-

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mena which occur at their séances, as well as all the communications they receive, are the work of these separated spirits. Moreover, they maintain that this communication of the departed spirits with living men is one of God's appointed means of teaching us concerning the life beyond the grave, and of drawing us to closer and more intimate union with Himself. According to this theory, the spirits of the dead are appointed as the guides and teachers of men, and to them we are to look for light concerning all our duties to God, and the future state of our souls, which men feel to be the one knowledge of paramount importance. This position of Spiritualists could be established by many quotations from their own writings, but these are needless, since it will be readily admitted by them. Even though Spiritualism has helped to undermine Materialism, it does not follow that it has done man any good. Convinced as I am that the enemy of souls is the author of Spiritualism, I recognise the fact that the errors it teaches suit his object, which is the destruction of souls, as well as the errors of Materialism.

Whether man can establish intercourse with the dead, as Spiritualists maintain, is wholly uncertain. There is no sure foundation for

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such an opinion. The Catholic Church has dealt with this question from earliest times, and she has an unbroken tradition from the Fathers, which is confirmed by the consensus of her theologians, to the effect that such intercourse with the dead is beyond man's power. Many arguments are used also to show that the spirits of the dead are incapable of communicating, even if men should wish to do so.

Moreover, the more reliable and cautious scientists who have examined Spiritualistic phenomena, and have testified to their reality, have not committed themselves further than to declare that these phenomena must be attributed to intelligent agents. They do not, however, assert that these intelligences are the spirits of the dead; in fact, they state that there does not exist evidence which would warrant that conclusion.

Again, all men know with what extreme care and patience the Society for Psychical Research is constantly inquiring into all the phenomena presented by Spiritualism. This inquiry is characterised by disinterestedness, and scientific accuracy. In the result, the Society (always making allowance for some fraud) has asserted the reality of the phenomena, but it has never committed itself to the Spiritualistic hypothesis.

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As a matter of fact, the theory, that the manifestations of the séance room are from the spirits of the dead rests solely upon the declarations of the manifesting intelligences, and these are utterly unreliable. Therefore, now that we are proceeding to examine the position assumed by Spiritualists, let it be understood, that though I may accept it for the sake of the arguments I advance, I do not admit it.

From the words of Deut. xviii., it is clear that man is forbidden to *seek* the truth from the dead. Now, if we do seek the truth in this manner in direct defiance of God's definite law to the contrary, we can only expect to fall under His condemnation, and to pay the penalty for our disobedience. For there is a principle which holds good throughout the whole realm of law. The principle is this, *Every law must have its sanction*. The word sanction I use in the legal sense. Sanction is that which enforces obedience, or, in other words, it is the *penalty*, attached to the law, to be inflicted upon those who defy and break the law. Every wise lawgiver attaches a sanction to his law. To edit laws and to leave them to the will of the subjects, to obey or disobey them, would be the act not of a wise lawgiver, but of a feeble, vacillating ruler. Thus, when Parliament legis-

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lates upon any point that is for the good regulation of the community, it invariably adds its sanction to the law, *i.e.* it provides a penalty to be inflicted upon any who disregard its authority.

God is no exception to this principle, since He is infinitely wise, and consequently a most wise lawgiver. Consider for a moment what the result would be of disregarding the laws of nature which God has laid down. We find that these laws avenge themselves against the culprit. If we defy the laws of health, before long health is lost, and the offender becomes a wreck. If a man defies the laws of social intercourse, if he is surly and morose, soon he finds himself isolated, and his fellow-men shun him ; if he is shiftY and untrustworthy, he soon finds that no man believes or trusts him. If a man offends against a definite social law, society avenges itself, and rids itself of the nuisance by depriving such a one of his liberty, and putting him under lock and key.

Again, there is a terrible penalty attaching to all moral offences, in the gradual loss of moral sense and the hardening of the will, which will make conversion to God difficult, and, if carried far enough, practically impossible.

It is in this sense that I understand those passages in Scripture in which God is spoken of

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as hardening the hearts of men ; as when God said He would harden the heart of Pharaoh. We cannot imagine that God directly and of set purpose hardened the heart of Pharaoh so that he should not be able to do right, for this would amount to depriving man of the gift of free-will. This effect was the natural working of the moral law. The penalty of disregarding the moral law is the loss of moral sense, and the consequent darkness of intellect and the hardening of the will. Pharaoh defied God's commands, and fell under the consequences of so acting. He then was the cause of his own hardness of heart, which is clearly indicated in the fifteenth verse of the eighth chapter of Exodus : ' And Pharaoh, seeing that rest [from the second plague] was given, hardened his own heart, and did not hear them [*i.e.* Moses and Aaron], as the Lord had commanded.'

You are naturally thinking in your mind how all this applies to the matter in hand. It is in this way : there is a most definite law forbidding men to seek the truth from the dead, and we may surely expect, if we dare to disobey that law, to incur some serious penalty, and it seems to me that a study of the communications made by the intelligences manifesting at Spiritualistic séances justifies us in concluding

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that the penalty man incurs is, that instead of obtaining the truth, he meets with deception and lies.

The first proof of this is to be found in what may be called the religious utterances of the spirits. It is a common thing in the séance rooms for the spirits to make statements on points of religion. These statements certainly do not seem to be suggested by any love for the truth, but rather with the object of engendering confidence in the minds of the sitters who come to seek the truth from them. The average sitter is inclined to think that all is right when he hears some statement made of a high moral character, forgetting that words are of very little value unless they are tested and corroborated. It is quite possible for a person to utter sentiments of high moral tone though his life by no means corresponds with the words he speaks.

These spirits accommodate themselves to their hearers in a way which shows them to be untruthful. Here in England they talk Protestantism, in Switzerland they talk Calvinism, in Germany Lutheranism, in Japan and the East Buddhism. To Catholics, they will talk Catholicism, though it is discovered that then they use equivocal terms, so that when they

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are cross-examined, and pressed to define the meaning of the terms they use, they turn out to be non-Catholic in sense. This fact necessarily convicts them of falsehood. If they claim to be commissioned by God to teach us, their teaching, wherever or to whomsoever it is given, must be consistent ; but if they teach every variety of contradiction, such as are found in the different religions they advocate, as occasions require, their claim must be considered false. We know that truth is necessarily one. When we are brought face to face with contradictions, we know, by a natural instinct, that they cannot both be true.

This is quite sufficient to convince any Catholic of the complete hollowness of the claims of Spiritualism. The Catholic, by reason of his early religious training, is logical and consistent. He understands, in the true sense, the unity of truth. He understands that contrary and contradictory statements cannot stand together. Of two contrary propositions, he knows that both may be false, that one may be true and the other false, but that under no circumstances can they both be true. Of two contradictory propositions, he knows that one is true and one is false, but that they can never both be true together.

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This appreciation of the unity of truth he applies to his religious knowledge as well as to all other departments of truth, and to all affairs of common life. As he would not tolerate contradictions in any subject that he was mastering, nor in his domestic or political life, but would at once detect error whenever evident contradiction was found, so in his religious beliefs, contradiction at once means falsity. Seeing, therefore, that the spirits are constantly making statements, in religious matters, that are contradictory of one another, and all contradictory of the faith he holds, the Catholic has no other alternative but to reject their statements as not only misleading, but absolutely false.

For the truths of revelation are absolutely unchangeable. They are true for all men, for all time, and for all places. They cannot be treated as we treat these truths which we receive upon human authority. Authority both human and divine is the foundation of faith, and the truths received upon human authority are, at all times, liable to revision, until they enter into the class of demonstrated truths. Then they no longer rest upon authority, but are believed because of the evidence they bear upon their own face. The reason why

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such truths are liable to revision is because the authority upon which they rest is not infallible. Just because it is always possible that some element in the truth stated may have been overlooked, it is obvious that when, at any later period, that unobserved element comes to be observed, all the statements that depend upon it must be revised and restated. Not so with divine authority, for behind that divine authority there is an infinite wisdom, which takes cognisance of every element, and of every bearing of the truths it utters, so that nothing remains for after discovery, and therefore the necessity for revising and restating the truths it has once uttered can never arise. That divine authority is the foundation of the Catholic's faith, so that any statement which infringes in any degree upon that, much more any statement that contradicts that faith, is to the Catholic false and delusive.

To give one example for the moment. The Christian holds that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men. 'And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. For He shall save His people from their sins.'¹ 'For, this day, is born to you a Saviour.'² Now Spiritualists tell us that Jesus Christ is not the

¹ St. Matt. i. 21.

² St. Luke ii. 11.

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Saviour of men, but that every man works out his own salvation. These statements are absolutely contradictory. They cannot both stand together. That Christ is the Saviour of all mankind is a truth at the very foundation of Christianity. To the Christian this is a principle which is not open to controversy. It is an axiom ; one of those 'infallible axioms and precepts of sacred truth, delivered even in the very letter of the law of God.' If therefore Spiritualism makes contradictory statements, and if it makes statements subversive of the very foundation of our Christian faith, what are we to think of its claim to a commission from God to teach men the truth ? The answer to that question I can leave to the intelligence of my hearers.

But we must pursue still further this point of the untruthfulness of these spirits that manifest in the séance room. These spirits are convicted of untruthfulness in such trivial commonplace things, and in such a meaningless manner, that the conclusion we are forced to is that lying is so much a part of their nature that they cannot help themselves ; indeed, that they revel in it. These spirits are always ready to declare their own identity. As soon as ever a spirit manifests its presence in the

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séance room, naturally it is asked who it is. As a rule they declare themselves to be some person known to the sitters, either personally or by reputation. They seem fond of parading as the spirits of some celebrated persons, but although they may succeed, even for years, in imposing upon their devotees, sooner or later they are usually found out to be lying. For years there has been a spirit manifesting, whose account of himself is that he was a buccaneer during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and who calls himself John King. It is obviously a very difficult thing, at this distance of time, to verify any statements that he may make. One thing, however, can be safely asserted, viz. that considering his coarseness and vulgarity, and the evident delight he takes in recounting his discreditable piratical enterprises, a sojourn of three hundred years in the spirit spheres has not tended to improve his moral character. As time has gone on we have had a number of Shakespeares. Some of these were discovered in their fraud and discomfited without delay, because it was found that they could not even speak English correctly and grammatically; and the rest have all failed, since they were proved to be ignorant of some of Shakespeare's best-known works. When asked

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to explain to the sitters these extraordinary discrepancies, some were forced to admit that they had been lying, others sulked and would not answer, and could not be induced to manifest any more. Consequently, although so many spirits have claimed at different times to be the spirit of Shakespeare, no one believes that Shakespeare has ever yet manifested, and we are still waiting for the real Shakespeare to turn up.

Examples of falsehoods told by spirits in asserting their identity could be quoted almost indefinitely, but we must be satisfied with one or two which are vouched for by witnesses whose word cannot be questioned.

Among American mediums who have visited England perhaps the most remarkable and best known is Mrs. Piper. She had various spirits who used to control her. I may as well, at this point, explain that mediums usually have one or more spirits who manifest through them, and by whom the medium gets into communication with any other spirits with whom the sitters wish to speak. These familiar spirits are, in spiritualistic language, called the 'controls' of the medium. Mrs. Piper, while here in England, had several 'controls': one professed to be the spirit of George Eliot, and

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another asserted that he was the spirit of a Dr. Phinuit, a French doctor, who had lived at Marseilles some years previous, and who had become an advanced spirit and was eager to prove that he continued to live after the death of the body. These two controls were observed carefully, and all their sayings compared, in order to test the truth of their statements. The observations that are recorded are of such a nature as to leave the mind altogether unsatisfied as to the identity claimed. To put them before you would be impossible in the time at my disposal, but one statement I will quote, which may be taken as a summary of what has been written on the subject. The statement I allude to is one made by Mrs. Sidgwick, wife of Professor Sidgwick of Cambridge, who devoted much time and attention to Mrs. Piper's controls. Speaking generally of these controls, Mrs. Sidgwick says: 'A disposition to assume powers not possessed, and to resort to prevarication and false excuses to account for ignorance or failure, are moral defects which are well known to be frequently exhibited in automatic writing, and which are abundantly exhibited in Mrs. Piper's trance utterances, whether spoken or written.'¹

¹ *Proceedings of Society of Psychical Research*, vol. xxxvi.

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Speaking of these two controls individually, Mrs. Sidgwick says of the spirit professing to be George Eliot, that 'not once was there a glimpse of truth in what it said.'

Of the control calling itself Phinuit she writes: 'His character is tricky. He has all sorts of ways of getting out of a difficult position. He will ignore a question that does not please him, or change the subject, or discuss side-issues to gain time; often returning later to the point, and dealing with it correctly enough, suggesting the possibility of his waiting for the chance of getting the information needed from the mind of the sitter.'

No one now believes in Phinuit's identity, for in an evil moment for him he was interviewed by one who knew Marseilles well at the time Phinuit was supposed to be living there. The interviewer had never heard of a Dr. Phinuit, and when this control was questioned about all the well-known doctors at Marseilles, it was found he knew none of them; and when at length he was spoken to in French, it was discovered that he could not speak his own language.

This parading, by the spirits, in personalities of well-known persons still goes on, and is in fact a principal feature in spiritistic séances.

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Mr. Francis Podmore, who has practically made Spiritualism his life's study, has expressed his opinion on the reliability of these spirits in a very few words. He says : 'A certain degree of moral perversity is a frequent and notorious characteristic of automatic expressions.'

I will refer to one more Spiritualist, for it is better they should speak rather than I, and then I will leave the subject of the untruthfulness of these spirits. I refer to Mr. Stainton-Moses. As I shall have a great deal to say about his book *Spirit Teaching* later on, I must introduce you to him. He was at one time an Anglican clergyman, and for years a professor at the London University College. He became a Spiritualist, and in course of time one of the most remarkable mediums or 'sensitives' that Spiritualism has ever known. Many volumes have come from his pen, among them one called *Spirit Identity*. At this moment my only object is to quote him on the subject of the untruthfulness and unreliability of spirit utterances. I am very glad to quote him because stronger words than his could not be used to describe the character of these spirits. He says : 'Some spirits will assent to leading questions, and, possessed apparently with a desire to please, or unconscious of the import of what they say, or

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without moral consciousness, will say anything. Such motiveless lying bespeaks a deeply evil nature. Such an impostor, acting with an air of sincerity, must be as Satan clothed in Light.'

I can imagine a Spiritualist thinking that I am unfair to Mr. Stainton-Moses, insomuch as I appear to apply to all spirits his words, which are spoken only of some spirits which are manifestly of a very low moral order, whereas there are many spirits manifesting at séances which are of a very high moral order, and whose influence upon men is of the utmost benefit. I do not wish for one moment to be unfair either to Mr. Stainton-Moses or Spiritualism. It is obvious that he meant his words to apply to some spirits only, for he would not have used them of those spirits which are said to be of a high moral order. But to address myself to this objection, let me say that, as to the influence of these spirits being for the benefit of men, there will be much to be said in the last of these addresses. Consequently it need not be touched now. But is it the case that the spirits who assert that they come from the highest spirit spheres, and who moreover say many beautiful things in their communications, are to be trusted? Facts certainly do not exact such confidence

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from us, for they are just as mysterious concerning their identity as the spirits of so-called lower spheres, and apparently as untrustworthy. I think it would be admitted by all Spiritualists that the 'controls' of Mr. Stainton-Moses are the most advanced and enlightened spirits that have ever manifested. The account they gave of themselves was that they were great sages of antiquity, who were dwelling in the highest spirit spheres, and that during all the ages of spirit life they had acquired vast stores of learning about the future life, religion, and our relations to God and to our fellow-men; and lastly, that their mission on this earth was to give men the advantage of their great knowledge and experience. This account of themselves is universally accepted by Spiritualists, though not supported by any evidence worthy of the name. Through Mr. Stainton-Moses these controls have communicated to the world a code of teaching which certainly contains a number of beautiful sayings, though to Christian ears it is absolutely abhorrent. This teaching is looked upon with great favour by Spiritualists, and universally quoted with approval. The greatest interest was felt about these controls. From the beginning Mr. Stainton-Moses endeavoured to learn who they

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were. For long they apparently assumed certain aliases, viz. Emperor, Rector, and Doctor. These were, of course, understood to be false names, so Mr. Moses continually pressed his controls to give him their true earth names. This they refused to do. He went to other circles, and attempted, from other spirits, to obtain the earth name of Emperor. On one occasion he was told that Emperor was really Zoud, a Russian historian. This Emperor denied, and reproached Mr. Moses for his anxiety in the matter ; an anxiety which we should consider not only excusable but highly reasonable and prudent. At length he obtained from his controls the names by which they were known while living in this mortal life. Nevertheless, he seems to have had misgivings as to the truth of this communication. He confided these names to a great friend and an ardent Spiritualist, apparently with the object of using this knowledge later on as a test of the truthfulness of these three spirits. To no other living soul was this secret confided ; it was sacred to these two men. When Mr. Stainton-Moses died, the one only existing mind in this mortal life that held the information of the earth names of Emperor, Rector, and Doctor was that of his friend

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Mr. F. W. H. Myers. Soon after his death it was heard that the spirit of Stainton-Moses was manifesting in America, through the mediumship of Mrs. Piper. Here then seemed a splendid opportunity of testing the truth of the many utterances of his former 'controls,' as well as their identity. But in the result, this so-called spirit of Stainton-Moses began commenting upon some of the articles of doctrine made known to the world through himself by his former controls and guides. Some of these articles he modified to a considerable degree, some he declared to be untrue and contrary to what he himself had learned and experienced since entering into the spirit world. Then this was obviously a splendid opportunity of testing whether this manifesting spirit was really that of Mr. Moses, because no other being was aware of the earth names of Imperator, Rector, and Doctor except himself. This question was put to the spirit: What were the earth names of the three spirits which controlled you during your mortal life? The response did not come readily. Considerable shuffling and fencing were indulged in. The question was pressed, because the answer would go so far in establishing the identity of these three personalities, and would give such con-

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fidence to men in spirit utterances. When at last this spirit of Mr. Stainton-Moses was induced to give these three names, he did so, we are told by Professor W. R. Newbold,¹ 'with the most solemn asseveration of their accuracy and with apparent consciousness of the importance of his statement to the cause which he had in life much at heart.' Professor Newbold proceeds to say that these names must have been known to Mr. Moses, and 'of all possible things would seem to be the hardest to forget—the names of the spirit friends who, as he claims, opened his eyes, while still on earth, to the realities of the eternal life.' The names revealed by this spirit of Mr. Moses were at once communicated to Mr. Myers, 'and not one of these names is true or has the least semblance of truth.'

This complete failure seems to land us in a tangle. Either this was the real spirit of Mr. Moses and spoke the truth, in which case his three former guides were undoubtedly untruthful; or it was deceiving us, which would be difficult to assume on spiritualistic principles, considering the truthful and high moral character of Mr. Moses during his earth life; or it was not his spirit at all but some impersonation.

¹ Part 34, *Proceedings Soc. Psych. Research.*

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In any case the whole incident seems to show that even when dealing with the best and highest of the spirits, and the most upright and developed mediums, we are as liable to meet with deception as when dealing with spirits of the low spheres and with an undeveloped medium.

Thus it is that sooner or later these spirits are found to be false, lying spirits. For if there was one direction more than another where we might have looked for truth and straightforwardness, it certainly was in the manifestations accorded to Mr. Moses by Imperator, Rector, and Doctor ; for never before had these spirit communications apparently reached so high a level. And yet time shows that there is as little reliance to be placed upon these communications as in any others ; all alike have the same character, viz. untruthfulness.

What then is to be thought of this mass of contradictions and absence of truth, which is met with in these spirit communications ?

It would be impious to connect it with God, in the sense that these spirits are commissioned by God to teach us the truth. God is infinite truth, and it is inconceivable that untruthful spirits, as these prove themselves to be, should

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be the means chosen by Him to communicate truth to us and lead us to Himself. It would follow then that these spirits are speaking not in the name of God, but in their own names, and seeing the moral depravity of their natures, which is shown by their untruthfulness, we are not unnaturally drawn to the belief that their object is to lead us away from the truth and from God.

Moreover, it is a fair question to ask ourselves: If these spirits are what they pretend to be, and are really commissioned by God to the great work of propagating truth, why do they conceal their identity? A knowledge of their identity, always supposing they are pure and holy spirits, would very considerably aid the great cause of truth, for it would at once win the confidence of men. On the other hand, all this wholly unnecessary (always supposing they are pure and holy) mystery concerning their real personalities, accompanied as it manifestly is with 'motiveless lying,' injures the cause of truth, because men turn away in disgust and refuse to believe anything that is said.

Then, again, the persistent mystery concerning their identity which, according to the spirits' account of themselves, is not only unnecessary

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but damaging, leads men to conclude that the probable reason for mystery is that their real identity, if established, would be no credit to themselves.

This brings me to a point where I can conveniently put before you an argument which must be convincing to all Catholics, because it is a conclusion of reason from premises furnished by our faith. In my next sermon I hope to give you other arguments founded on reason alone, which will appeal to all alike, Catholic and non-Catholic.

According to our faith the souls of the departed have three possible immediate or proximate destinies, though only two ultimate destinies. (1) The souls of the departed are either so just and pure that they can enter at once into the presence of the All-pure God. In that case their immediate and their ultimate destiny is heaven.

(2) Or the souls of the departed are essentially just, and ultimately will enter into the presence of God, but as yet have upon them some venial sin, or affection for sin, or some debt of punishment due to sin already pardoned as to its guilt, but which has not yet been worked out ; and such souls, according to the revealed teaching of Christianity, go for a time to a

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place of cleansing and purification before reaching their ultimate destiny, which also is heaven.

(3) Or other souls depart this life so turned away from God by sin as to be utterly depraved, and deserving only of the utmost sanction by which God enforces submission to His laws. The immediate and ultimate destiny of such souls is hell.

Besides the spirits of the departed there are the angelic spirits. These we know are divided into two classes: the faithful angels, who by their fidelity have remained, as God made them, His messengers, loyal in doing the behests of His Divine Majesty; and the fallen angels, unfaithful to their destiny, condemned to eternal separation from God. 'And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan . . . and his angels were cast out with him.'¹

The souls of the saved both in heaven and in purgatory are wholly united to the will of God. Union with the will of God is the very essence of their happiness and joy, and they are confirmed in that union with the divine will, so that they are altogether placed beyond the possibility of opposing themselves to God. But we have already seen that God has, in

¹ Apocalypse xii. 9.

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the clearest and most emphatic manner, made known to us that it is His will that no man should attempt to '*seek the truth from the dead,*' and that such a one '*the Lord abhorreth.*'

How then can we suppose, if man defies the law of God, refuses to submit to this clear declaration of the divine will, and 'seeks to know the truth from the dead,' that these souls would lend themselves to co-operate with him in his disobedience and defiance? Such a thought would be an insult and a degradation to these souls to whom the will of God is so dear.

The souls in purgatory, we are taught, are perfectly content to remain in their cleansing sufferings, and even to wait long years for the happiness which is secured to them, the very security of which is a source of joy to them in the midst of their pains. They knew full well that God, if He so willed, could grant them free pardon, and by reason of that free pardon admit them without delay into His presence. But they murmur not, because they know that it is His divine will that they work out their cleansing in pain and suffering, and to them that will is ever adorable. How then can we imagine that they would come down to our earth sphere to hold converse with their

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fellow-men in absolute defiance of the express command of God ?

We cannot conceive that these souls or the glorified souls would co-operate with man in 'seeking the truth from the dead,' which God has declared to be 'an abomination' before Him, and whom He threatened to 'destroy from among the people' and ordered 'to be stoned to death.'

But that the souls of the depraved and lost would willingly take part with man, and co-operate with him in defying God's commands, we can only too easily understand. The damned are confirmed in evil. Through life they averted themselves from God, and turned their wills against Him. Death finds them thus averted, and stamps them in that aversion for ever. 'In what place soever the tree shall fall, there shall it be.'¹ That aversion being complete they have nothing in common with God, but are opposed to Him in everything.

As the good have made God their object in life and have become enamoured of Him, death finds them in that state and confirms them in Love ; so the evil, finding their object not in God, but in all that is opposed to God, and in all that God hates, naturally hate God

¹ Ecclesiastes xi. 3.

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and all who are acceptable to Him, and they hate His interests and all that serves to those interests. In this they are like to the fallen angels who are the declared enemies of God and man, 'for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'¹ These lost souls would consequently be fit instruments, in the hands of the fallen angels, to accomplish the ruin of man, for in their hatred of God they would delight to induce men to disobey Him, to insult Him by their defiance of His commands, and thus bring down upon their victims a condemnation similar to that which they themselves have incurred.

Therefore admitting, for argument's sake, that Spiritualists do really get into communication with the spirits of the dead, Catholics would have but one alternative open to them, viz. to hold that the spirits of the dead, with which Spiritualists communicate, can be no other than the spirits of the lost, and whether we place ourselves in communion with, and seek companionship of, the fallen angels or of the spirits of the damned, the result must be the same, and that is the ruin of the soul. If

¹ Ephesians vi. 12.

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to indulge in the companionship of evil and depraved men has but the one result of corrupting morals, how much more complete must be the ruin, both of faith and morals, when men put themselves into communion with the spirits of the departed, who by their evil lives and deaths are confirmed in all their depravity and wickedness.

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SERMON IV

‘Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. *By their fruits you shall know them.* Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, *neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit.*’—
ST. MATTHEW vii. 18, *seq.*

A CRITICISM of a former sermon, appearing in one of the Spiritualistic journals, has been brought to my notice through the post, and before proceeding with my subject I should like to put it before you, and make a few very obvious remarks upon it.

The criticism is as follows: ‘The Rev. Father Miller, while deploring the lack of submission to the authority of the Church, disapproves of “passivity” and the practice of giving up the will and mind to the control of outside intelligences—so do we, whether those intelligences are in or outside of the body. Thoughtful mediums and Spiritualists do not unreservedly surrender their minds and wills

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as suggested. Passivity does not mean the abandonment of self to foreign powers, but rather a temporary attitude of receptivity. Guidance, not authoritarian domination, is what is desired, and each sitter in a circle should maintain the right of private judgment, although for the time being surrendering its exercise—especially the critical faculty. The Rev. Father Miller should read “M. A. Oxon’s” *Advice to Inquirers*; he would see that they are counselled to “keep a level head,” and to accept only that which they find to be true, right, and reasonable.’

The paragraph from ‘M. A. Oxon’s’ *Advice to Inquirers* which was enclosed with the above criticism, and marked for my observation, runs thus: ‘Lastly, try the results you get (at the séance) by the light of reason. Maintain a level head and a clear judgment. Do not believe everything you are told, for though the great unseen world contains many a wise and discerning spirit, it also has in it the accumulation of human folly, vanity, and error; and this lies nearer to the surface than that which is wise and good. Distrust the free use of great names. Never for a moment abandon the use of reason. Do not enter into a very solemn investigation in a spirit of idle curiosity or frivolity.

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Cultivate a reverent desire for what is pure, good, and true. You will be repaid if you gain only a well-grounded conviction that there is a life after death, for which a pure and good life before death is the best and wisest preparation.'

With regard to the first criticism, I find myself in complete agreement with my critic, so that I will willingly accept his description of passivity, viz. 'a temporary attitude of receptivity.' All that I intended to suggest was that the attitude required of sitters was one of receptivity, *i.e.* for the time being they are to 'suspend the exercise' of their 'private judgment,' and as 'judgment' is the proper act of reason, this means the suspension of reason and will in order to facilitate the work of spirits in introducing their own impressions and reasonings upon the sitter's mind. This we disapprove of, because if we invite, even temporarily, the spirits to invade our minds and wills and to impress them at their own pleasure, we may find that the guests we have invited may not take their departure when we wish to be rid of them. Thus this temporary 'suspending' or surrender when frequently repeated may easily become a habit, and does undoubtedly often become a complete surrender in spite of oneself.

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As to the paragraph of 'M.A. Oxon's' *Advice to Inquirers*, which I am advised to read, it has long been known to me, and was specially in my mind during my last sermon. In it you may notice that the inquirer is warned to distrust the free use of great names. You may remember that I also gave you that advice. But why does 'M.A. Oxon' give us this advice? Clearly because the spirits are not to be believed. That is my point. Again, 'Do not believe everything you are told.' Why? unless it is that these spirits cannot be believed. Mr. Stainton-Moses, however, gives you the reason, 'for though the great unseen world contains many a wise and discerning spirit, it also has in it the accumulation of human folly, vanity, and error; and this lies nearer to the surface than that which is wise and good.' So, apparently, the unfortunate inquirer must dig his way through this stratum of 'human folly, vanity, and error,' which is on the surface, before he can hope to reach the 'wise and the good.' And through all this he is warned to 'keep a level head.' This may in itself be excellent advice, but under the circumstances it appears to be little short of a cruel mockery. I might just as well send an unfortunate man across a precipice upon a tight-rope, and advise him,

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that whatever else he might do, to be sure to keep his balance. And when the unfortunate man had fallen into the precipice, as in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he certainly would, it would be the cruellest mockery to say to him, 'But I told you to keep your balance.' And then, what is to be the outcome of all this? We are told that 'you will be repaid if you gain *only* (the italics are mine) a well-grounded conviction that there is a life after death, for which a pure and good life before death is the best and wisest preparation.' But man has never lacked this knowledge. From the dawn of the human race God has made this known by His immediate revelation to our first parents; He has made it known through His messenger, the prophets; He has made it known by His Son.¹ 'God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all in these days hath spoken to us by His Son,'² and 'therefore ought we more diligently to observe the things which we have heard, lest perhaps we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels (*i.e.* messengers) became steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,

¹ Hebrews i. 1, 2.

² Hebrews ii. 1, 2, 3.

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how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? which having been declared by the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them (the apostles) that heard Him.' So God still makes known this through His Apostolic Church, and every little Christian child drinks in this knowledge of a future life, depending upon a good pure life here on earth ; and that knowledge is a certain conviction, depending not upon the testimony of spirits, which cannot be believed, but upon the authority of God who can neither deceive or be deceived.

And now to return to my subject. After giving you an argument founded upon our faith as Catholics I promised to give you other arguments, founded purely on reason, why these spirits that manifest are not to be believed or trusted.

These spirits pose as being the guides of men, to lead them to a knowledge of the future life. It is a notorious fact that Spiritualists seek guidance from these spirits, and that the one object hoped for from communication with them is 'a well-grounded conviction that there is a life after death, for which a pure and good life before death is the best and wisest preparation.'¹ The spirits say : 'We are the

¹ Imperator to Stainton-Moses, *Spirit Teaching*, p. 23.

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bearers of Divine Truth.' They pose likewise as guides not only to knowledge of future life, but also in our conduct and behaviour here on earth—in a word, in all our relations with God.¹

These spirits then proclaim themselves as our guides in the eternal interests of our immortal souls. In this case we are surely bound to act with at least the same human prudence that every reasonable man uses in all the serious interests of this mortal life. No reasonable man confides his financial affairs, or serious family affairs, into the hands of a fellow-man, unless he feels that he has good grounds for trusting him and placing implicit confidence in him. Still less would any man act imprudently if his life was in question. No man having to make a journey over a dangerous, and to himself an unknown mountain pass, would set out unless accompanied with competent guides. He would seek men who had a reputation as skilful mountaineers, and who were actually acquainted with the path to be taken across the pass in question. If a guide presented himself for employment who, on previous occasions, had lost the parties confided to his care, would any sane man confide himself and his life to such an one? When,

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 54.

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however, it is a question of seeking a guide in whom to confide the eternal interests of our immortal souls, we should not be prudent, nay, we should not be reasonable, if we did not assure ourselves of the character and the competency of the guide who offered his services.

But these spirits who offer to conduct us through all the dangers and pitfalls of this mortal life, and to bring us to our eternal home, produce no credentials whatever that are worthy of the name. They make abundant protestations concerning their credentials, but they offer us nothing beyond their own unsupported word. Words and assurances are never considered satisfactory credentials. Words and assurances are always given by men who play the confidence trick, and no one has the least sympathy with the victim of the trick, because his conduct in accepting and acting upon the unsupported word of a stranger was not reasonable or prudent but simple folly. Nor does it avail for Spiritualists to refer to the beautiful things which are said in some of these spirit messages. It is only too well known that men of depraved life can, and do, utter sentiments of very high moral tone. When such arguments are put forward as the credentials of these spirits, one cannot help remembering

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Mr. Moses' remark concerning 'Satan clothed in light.' As the words and assurances of these spirits, unsupported by any other evidence, do not suffice to give us confidence, there remains only one other alternative: we must first of all study the nature of their acts, that we may gain some knowledge of their personalities; and we may study the result of their guidance in the case of those persons who have already confided in them, that, profiting by their experience, we may judge whether it would be wise and prudent, on our part, to place our interests in their hands.

The argument I propose to put before you, though it will assume several forms, or, perhaps better, will reach the conclusion along several distinct paths, will nevertheless be founded upon one single principle, which all men enjoying normal reason must admit. This principle upon which I rely is universally admitted, and lies at the base of every single argument that the reason uses. It is a form of that universal principle that every effect must necessarily have a cause, and that there must necessarily be a due proportion between the cause and the effect which flows from it. But the words in which I express this principle are very familiar to you all, and are often upon

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your lips, or at least are implied in the arguments you use. It is this: 'By their fruits you shall know them.'

The Incarnate Wisdom of God enunciated, and by His use of it approved of, this principle. Nay He urged it very emphatically, as leading necessarily to a result of absolute certainty. He said: 'Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit.'¹ We have then the best possible authority for applying this principle, the unanimous consent of the human race, confirmed by the authoritative approval of the Incarnate Wisdom of God.

As I have already pointed out, words cannot be taken as fruits until they are corroborated and proved to be true, or discovered to be false. Uncorroborated utterances cannot be accepted as fruits. This must be kept in mind because the spirits are continually referring to their utterances as the works by which their

¹ St. Matthew vii. 18, *seq.*

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claim may be proved. Words frequently do not correspond with the ideas in the mind. In this case the utterances are hypocritical. It was especially in reference to hypocrites and false prophets that our Divine Lord uttered this principle.

We turn then to examine these would-be guides according to the principle we have laid down.

The Church puts herself forward as the guide of men in all their eternal interests, but at the same time she puts forward her credentials. Those credentials are strong and powerful in themselves, and in the foundation upon which they rest. They have become eminently venerable because though all the ages, since Christ instituted her, they have stood the wear of time, and survived the shocks that have overthrown kingdoms and mighty empires; and moreover they are acknowledged by all men, because she has conquered the world's paganism and idolatry, and led the nations to the height of the gospel faith and Christian morality. What credentials do these spirit guides offer us, that we should withdraw ourselves from the guidance of this venerable Church and in its place adopt their guidance?

Their character as guides of men is already

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impugned by the fact, that I have displayed above, that they are untruthful and wholly untrustworthy. In the light of that fact what must men think of their claim to be the appointed guides of men?

But there is another fruit by which the character of these spirits as guides can be judged. We can examine what has been the result of their guidance, in the case of persons who have committed themselves to the spirits, and have fashioned their lives upon the teaching that these spirits have given them. The result, in the case of Christians, is always to ruin their faith, and in many instances their morals. It is, I fear, notorious that the morals of a large number of mediums do not bear looking into, and things that Spiritualists themselves have told me as happening at séances are, to say the least, morally discreditable. When faith is wrecked it is to be expected that morals will suffer. For it is faith that puts restraints upon the lower nature of man, and encourages the practice of self-denial, so when it is lost the restraints are removed and also the encouragements to virtue.

But my concern is with the loss of Faith. The proof of this statement will be fully appreciated after my concluding sermon, when I

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shall put before you the teaching of Spiritualists who would not for a moment deny that it is wholly destructive of Christian faith.

For the moment I shall content myself by giving you a few prominent examples of the result of spirit guidance.

The first example shall be of a Catholic lady, who gave herself up to Spiritualism little by little, and ended in open and formal apostasy as the direct consequence of the teaching she imbibed in her intercourse with the spirits. There is no reason whatever why the name should be concealed. In this case the name of the lady, and the whole of her dealings with the spirits, are public property, for she has published the account of her connection with Spiritualism in book form. No doubt every one who is listening to me is well acquainted with the name of Florence Marryat. A generation ago she was the authoress of many novels, which were very widely read at that time. She was a practical Catholic, and in the opening pages of her book she tells how, losing an infant child, and hearing that she might meet again and communicate with the spirit of her child through a spiritualistic medium, she asked her confessor whether she might go to a séance with this object. This confessor was a very

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prominent priest, a learned and a holy man, but unfortunately quite ignorant of this subject, in fact, one of the sceptics who persist in asserting that Spiritualism is essentially a system of fraud and trickery. He therefore told her she might go, and asked her to let him know what her experiences were. In an evil hour she began to frequent séances. There is no need to detail what her experiences were. Suffice it to say that they were very numerous, and that they extended to many parts of the world which she visited. The spirits manifested to her during many years, and few have had more striking materialisations than she. The spirits paraded as her child, so that she most firmly believed that she was in continual communication with the spirit of her dead child. But what is of interest is that, as you read the book page by page, you perceive that her faith is slipping away from her. She soon lives for the one morbid pleasure of being in the séance room, and when that attraction becomes so great that it outweighs every other interest in life, this so-called spirit of her daughter begins to instil into her a teaching concerning the future life which is entirely unchristian. The spirit tells her that in the spirit world all souls are advancing and progressing; that the worst spirits, *i.e.* the souls

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of evil and depraved men dying in all their sins, enter into the spirit world in all their evil state, but that, sooner or later, they begin to progress, and that this progress once commenced goes on steadily until they are wholly purged of evil.

Thus is undermined the Christian teaching of the punishment of evildoers by God, and God is reduced to a feeble and incompetent lawgiver incapable of efficiently safeguarding His legislation. Then she is taught that this progress towards perfection, which is made ultimately by the most depraved and hardened sinner, is not the work of grace, merited for us by the Divine Redeemer, and applied by the 'one Mediator,' but that it comes about by an ordinary law of nature, just in the same way as the infant, in the course of years, develops physical strength and powers of reasoning. Thus is undermined the supernatural character of eternal salvation, and all the doctrine of the atoning work and mediation of the Saviour.

So as you read through the account she has left of her experiences, and of the changes which (imperceptibly to her) came over her religious convictions, you perceive how one article of Christian faith after another disappears.

Notice that I say Christian, and not merely

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Catholic. For I have said, again and again, that Spiritualism and Christianity are absolutely incompatible. Therefore this argument which I am pressing, viz. of the loss of faith in consequence of dealing with Spiritualism, concerns all non-Catholics who believe in the divinity of Christ and in the Church which He has founded.

Florence Marryat thus clearly indicates how the faith is slipping from her, and it is not surprising that it should all end in apostasy. She does not in her book record her formal apostasy, but that it is clearly coming is obvious to all who read. As a matter of fact I know, from personal friends of hers, that she actually made a formal renouncement of her Catholic faith and of Christianity.

This should surely be a warning to all that these spirits cannot be trusted as the guides they pretend to be. To us these fundamental doctrines of Christianity, in a word, our faith, is not an open question. It is not a matter of controversy. Of these we are convinced. They are to us as the axioms of science are to the scientist. These axioms are convincing, because they carry with them their own evidence, and are as we say self-evident. Of our Christian doctrines we are convinced, because they came to us upon divine authority,

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and nothing can be more convincing than the word of God. This faith, then, is a treasure given into our keeping, but it may be lost if we allow our minds to be darkened by the clouds of doubt. And if we associate ourselves with spirits, who never cease to deny the revealed teaching of God, and who continually fill our minds with doctrine subversive of Christianity, and give ourselves up to their guidance, one only result is to be expected, viz. the complete loss of the treasure of the faith which we have received from God. This is the work of these spirit guides.

The next instance I will put forward is that of Mr. Stainton-Moses, in many ways the most remarkable medium that modern Spiritualism has known. As I have already told you he was an Anglican clergyman, and consequently a sincere believer in the divinity of Christ and in His Church. Like many another he entered upon Spiritualism in a casual manner, and by slow degrees was drawn deeper and deeper into it, until at length he became completely absorbed, and in time became the most celebrated exponent of its phenomena and teaching. He is a good example of the great danger attending even the first steps in the investigation of Spiritualism. The history of very

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many persons shows beyond doubt that by so doing you put yourself into the power of the spirits, which they often use with a cruel and unrelenting tyranny, and many, who would escape if they could, find it well-nigh impossible to do so.

Years after he had become a celebrated 'sensitive' his controls, especially Imperator, began communicating spirit doctrine and teaching upon the state of spirits beyond the grave, and upon the nature of God and upon our relations and duties towards Him. I am not here going into the details of that teaching, because I hope to conclude these instructions with one devoted entirely to the systematic teaching of the spirits. What I want to put before you now is the result of the guidance that these spirits afforded this Anglican clergyman.

Remember that Mr. Moses began his intercourse with the spirits when he was a firm believer in Christ's divinity. When his controls begin instilling into his mind their teaching, it is sad and pathetic to see the struggle the man makes to retain the faith which had been his all his life. Again and again, when some communication has been made to him by Imperator, which is wholly contrary to Christian teaching, he enters upon a defence of his

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faith, and a controversy, perhaps I might better say a conflict, is carried on between him and the spirit. It is positively painful to see how, time after time, in fact always, Stainton-Moses gives way. In other matters we may well accredit him with sagacity and consistency, but so blinded does he become by dallying with error, that in this contest in faith with his spirit control he gives way point after point, with miserable weakness to wretched illogical arguments, which are not worth the paper upon which they are written. He accepts statements upon the unsupported words of Emperor, and fallacies are allowed to pass which any child, fairly instructed in the catechism, ought to be able to detect. However, so great seems to be the attraction to continue this intercourse that all his genuine alarm is overcome, and so blind does he become to glaring inconsistencies, that in the end he unreservedly accepts the guidance of his controls, his faith is utterly destroyed, and he ceases to be a Christian.

These examples are quite typical of what occurs among the devotees of Spiritualism. The final breaking with Christianity may not occur until years have been spent in this intercourse, but that will be because frequently men do not follow out their intellectual position

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to its logical conclusions. It is a common thing for people to hold in a confused way propositions which are contradictory, without their being conscious of the contradiction ; but one thing is certain that, from the beginning of this intercourse, when the spirits first make statements concerning the future life, principles are being imbibed which are contrary to Christian teaching, and which only need to be worked out consistently to their logical conclusion to land a person in apostasy. This is so, because Christian teaching is a wonderfully logical and consistent body of truth, and if that body of truth is denied in one particular the whole body ceases to hold together, and consequently is ruined. Moreover, the whole Christian teaching rests, and is accepted by us, upon the authority of God revealing. But to question one article of that teaching is to question the divine authority and truth, which therefore affects the whole. ' Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all,'¹ may very well be applied to the entirety of the faith.

If you are not on the alert it is often very difficult to detect the ruin of Christian faith which results from partaking in Spiritualism.

¹ James ii. 10.

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I imagine that the evil spirits which control human beings in this spiritualistic system are so bent upon the destruction of souls that they conceal their real object under a great show of respect for the faith. To do otherwise, that is, to attack too openly all the faith, which has become endeared to the soul, would be to endanger their hold upon these souls. The last example I shall put before you will illustrate this. This instance happened within my own experience, and for some time puzzled me not a little.

Some four or five years ago I went, one evening, to a lecture on the subject of Spiritualism. The lecture was given in the drawing-room of a private house. The hostess, a Catholic lady, but unknown to me, having heard that I was interested in the subject, sent me an invitation. I was quite a stranger, but there were present some three or four other priests, friends of the hostess. The lecture was given by a Catholic gentleman. As I afterwards learned, a lady who was among the guests, an ardent and enthusiastic Spiritualist, had been invited in the hope that various opinions being represented by those present a discussion might follow the lecture. And surely enough that happened. No sooner was

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the lecture over than this lady rose and entered upon a spirited justification of Spiritualism. Her entire argument consisted in putting forward her own experiences ; and these were remarkable enough. From the sentiments she expressed she was evidently a woman of high moral standard, and her wish was to become more and more perfect, less and less earth-bound and more spiritual. This was to be accomplished by closer and more intimate union with God. She claimed to have achieved this by means of Spiritualism, which had altogether raised and ennobled her view of life, and had helped her to rise above the world and seek true perfection and happiness in that life, which would be continued beyond the grave. Throughout all this speech she spoke reverently of our Divine Lord and quoted His words freely to confirm all she said.

This all sounded well, though, to my mind, somewhat marred by overmuch self-assertion. Still the whole discourse was not a little disconcerting from the Christian standpoint, and was certainly of such a character as perhaps to lead simple-minded and unsuspecting persons to imagine that Spiritualism really led to the same end as Christianity, and perhaps even in a more pleasant and attractive manner.

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An interval of silence followed; and as there were present several priests, friends of the house, I, as a stranger, did not feel called upon to take part in the discussion. After some time an elderly lady rose and remarked that it seemed to her that all she had heard was very lovely and very beautiful, so it seemed to me that some one was in duty bound to say something for the cause of Christianity, and as no one else seemed inclined to do so I rose myself.

First I congratulated the lady upon her experiences, which doubtless were very satisfactory to herself personally, but as I presumed she was speaking in defence of the whole system of Spiritualism, as a system, I said that I should be much obliged to her if she would solve a difficulty which presented itself to my mind concerning that system. I have, I continued, some knowledge of what occurs at séances, in which spirits manifest. Many things occur which are utterly discreditable to every one taking part in them, both spirits and sitters. We know of spiritualistic circles abroad, at the séances of which nameless crimes are openly and shamelessly indulged in, reminding us more of the Roman orgies in the Golden House of Nero than of anything else. These I will not

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press. However, many of the séances which are held here in England are simply frivolous and puerile. At ninety-nine out of a hundred only those phenomena occur which are childish or meaningless. These consist in the movement of tables, lifting weights, waving mysterious lights, writing foolish and often illiterate messages. The communications made by these messages, or by signs such as raps, are often untrue and false. Some communications are questionable from a moral point of view, such, for instance, as giving tips to racing men, to assist them to successful betting. Sometimes the conduct of the spirits is positively cruel, as when a broken-hearted widow is told that the spirit of her lately deceased husband is present and anxious to communicate, and she is enraptured at the thought of once more conversing with him, and all the sitters present are on the tiptoe of expectation of a moving and pathetic scene; but the departed spirit has nothing more to say to the disconsolate widow than to ask her why she has moved his photograph from the table to the chimney-piece. Then I concluded by putting my difficulty, which was this: how could she believe, and how could she expect us to believe, that this system of Spiritualism was established by

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Almighty God as the means to bring men to a closer and more intimate union with Himself? Whether such a system was not wholly unworthy of the dignity and majesty of God, and far more fraught with danger to us than with help?

The reply which was given was very much like the answers given by the spirits themselves whenever they are put into a difficulty by an inquirer—*i.e.* it was no answer at all. She said that the question raised was an interesting one and important, and that it would give her great pleasure to answer it, but that an answer would be so long that it would be impossible then, as the hour was growing late. However, she added that she was then engaged in writing a series of articles in one of the prominent spiritualistic journals, in which she thought I might find a solution of my difficulty. For some weeks this journal reached me by post, presumably sent by this lady. I read all her articles, and I am compelled to say that no pretence of an answer to my objection was to be found.

But I found something else, which put an end to the perplexity which her address had caused me. I found that her Christian faith had long since gone. She was no longer a

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Christian. When extolling Spiritualism in her speech she had repeatedly referred to our Divine Lord, and had quoted His words with all the reverence that a Christian would show, so that it was difficult to imagine that she was not a believing Christian. As Easter was at hand, this lady, by way of providing her readers with some seasonable spiritual reading, wrote about the Resurrection of our Lord, and most explicitly denied the Resurrection from the dead in the true Christian sense. She declared that the Resurrection was not the raising of the true real body of our Lord. The real material body, according to her, never left the tomb again, but was dissolved in a natural way into its constituent elements—or, as she put it, it was dissipated.

The risen body of our Lord was merely a materialisation fashioned by His spirit, exactly similar to that which spirits use when appearing in bodily form at a séance, and that it was not the natural body of flesh and bone, in spite of all that Jesus said to the contrary. Now this mystery of the Resurrection is the pivot upon which the proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ turns; it is the principal of all the proofs that He was of the Father, His eternal begotten Son, equal to Him in all things.

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The paramount importance of this Christian teaching is shown by the clear words of St. Paul:

‘And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching in vain, and your faith also is vain.’¹

‘And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.’²

This loss of faith in Christ is certainly a fruit by which you may know these spirits and whence they are : it is the certain result of the guidance which they afford to those who trust them. This is not a mere accidental result of spirit guidance, as met with in Spiritualism, but the essentially necessary result, which will be still more evident to you when you have heard what spirit-teaching amounts to.

We must ever remember that faith is an inestimable treasure granted to us. It is in our charge to keep and to guard, that it may be the light of our lives, for it is by the faith that we must be saved. ‘For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.’³ ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved : but he that believeth

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 14.

² 1 Cor. xv. 17.

³ Rom. x. 4-9.

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not shall be damned.’¹ ‘And this is the will of my Father that sent Me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the last day.’² ‘He that doth not believe in Him is already judged: because he believeth not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God.’³

Immoral conduct and open sinning is not the only danger to the soul’s salvation. Our salvation will be still endangered even though our conduct may reach a high moral standard, if our faith is not entire. There is a very real sense in which a soul is in less danger under a habit of sinful conduct than under the loss of faith. For while faith remains there is far greater hope of the soul repenting of its evil ways, but if faith has gone the foundation of moral goodness is swept away, and a darkness settles down upon the soul, so that although it has eyes it sees not.

‘For without faith it is impossible to please God.’⁴

The fruit therefore of Spiritualism is the loss of Christian faith. I have but given you a very few examples to illustrate my point; and

¹ St. Mark xvi. 16.

³ St. John iii. 8.

² St. John vi. 40.

⁴ Heb. xi. 6.

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for the moment I must ask you to accept my word that this is what always happens, but when I have finished my concluding instruction upon the teaching of the spirits, you will be convinced that no other result than the destruction of Christian faith can possibly be expected from taking part in Spiritualism.

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SERMON V

‘For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places.’—EPHESIANS vi. 12.

THIS morning we shall consider another effect which is produced, not uncommonly, upon men by this forbidden intercourse with spirits, ‘seeking the truth from the dead.’ It is a danger which is very terrible, and which is fatal to both body and soul. I refer to the dreadful tyranny of the spirits, under which those who invoke them not unfrequently fall. This danger is in the beginning imperceptible, and for that reason the more insidious. For the most part it comes upon the devotees of Spiritualism by slow degrees. During the first stages of this intercourse Spiritualism is put forward in all its attractive features, so as to reassure and induce persons to continue and persevere, but by imperceptible degrees it gains so great an influence and power over them that they may even become genuinely alarmed at their state

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when it is too late. As the power of the spirit will has increased over theirs, so they find that their power over their own will has diminished to such an extent that they are reduced to slavery and unable to resist. Although, at moments, they realise the power that is exercised over them, and may sincerely wish to rid themselves of it, they discover, to their horror, that they have sunk to a level of weakness amounting to powerlessness.

This power which spirits gain over the human will is accomplished in this way. It is a well-known fact that in all this intercourse with them, the spirits require that the inquirers should submit their intelligences and their wills. At a séance the sitters are instructed to remain in an attitude of 'passivity.' By that is meant that the sitters are not to exercise their thoughts upon other matters than the affairs of the séance, and by a strong act of the will are to concentrate their attention upon the communication they seek from the spirits. This is declared necessary because the spirits are unable to impress their ideas and thoughts upon the mind unless they find it ready to receive impressions by reason of its passivity. Moreover, the sitter must not exercise his will in opposition to the spirits, nor resist their action upon him.

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It not unfrequently happens that, at a séance, the phenomena and the communications are unsuccessful, being very meagre, sometimes even wholly absent; and the reason mostly given is that the spirits are unable to manifest, because the minds and the wills of some of the sitters are actively opposed to them.

Certain it is that the difference which God has put between man and the lower creatures lies in the fact that he possesses the gifts of intelligence and free will. It is this free will together with intelligence that constitutes human superiority, and it is by the proper exercise and use of these gifts that man maintains the dignity conferred upon him, which differentiates him from all creation. This, however, is accomplished only when man uses these gifts for the purpose and end for which God bestowed them. God did not bestow free will upon man that he might choose between good and evil. Man was made free that he might be able, of his own choice, to serve God and obey, so that his service might be his own personal act, and that he might, by his willing obedience, obtain, as if by a right, the reward which God has magnanimously promised for his willing service. The power of choosing evil, therefore, is incidental to the power of choosing well, for it was

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not the divine purpose or object in granting the gift of free will. As long as the free will is used as God intended, in the choice of willing service, man increases in dignity and becomes a great power. His will becomes continually stronger and more powerful, for it is always gaining an increase of the greatest of all human qualities, moral strength, *i.e.* a strength founded upon the right and the true ; or, in other words, it rests upon the divine estimate of things, and acts accordingly. Such a free will, thus properly used, continually grows in mastery of itself, and all the adversaries of man and of his salvation may rage against him, but they are powerless and are flung back, just as the raging waters of the restless angry sea are broken and thrown back by the steadfast rock.

So while man holds on to the true freedom of his will, refusing to allow himself to come under the influence of a stronger will, he remains master of himself ; but when he tamely submits to the dictates of other wills, we know how easily he becomes weak and vacillating and uncertain of himself, for the simple reason that by submitting he loses will power and passes proportionately under the domination of other wills. It is a matter of common knowledge that one man can gain an ascend-

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ency over another and may dominate him until he becomes so weak-minded that he seems to have no will of his own left. It is this which happens to a man in this system of Spiritualism. The condition demanded of him is that he should assume an attitude of passivity, so as to allow the spirits to impose upon his unresisting intelligence and will whatever impressions they wish. By this voluntary renouncement of the exercise of will power the man's will passes for the time being under the domination of the spirit will, and as this weak and tame submission is repeated again and again, the will power of the man rapidly diminishes, and the influence or domination of the spirit will, to which he submits, correspondingly increases. At first the spirits will not alarm their victims by exercising their newly acquired power in any noticeable or unpleasant manner, but the time will come when the spirit, feeling that his victim is bound beyond all likelihood of escape, will rule tyrannically over the mental and bodily life of his slave, and often take fiendish delight in exercising the utmost cruelty, wantonly causing agony both of mind and body.

One of the most common methods by which the spirits obtain this domination over men is

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by what is usually termed 'automatic writing.' This in all probability you have heard of under the name of 'Planchette writing.' The planchette is so well known that I assume that no description of it is needed. 'Automatic writing' is also practised without the planchette. The writer merely takes a pencil and holds his hand, in writing position, over the paper. Under the invocation of the spirits, either actual or implied, it frequently happens, after some perseverance, that the pencil will move over the paper without the person in any way consciously guiding it. The hand of the writer passes under spirit control and is thereby moved. Here, as in all other instances, is required passivity of mind, and therein lies the danger. Once writing begins the attraction becomes greater. At first there may occur little else than meaningless scratching, or perhaps only an occasional word, and the writer may feel disappointment and disgust, and may be inclined to give up the attempt. Then suddenly will be worked out a startling sentence or message, which convinces the writer that there is working, through his writing, some intelligence quite distinct from his own. Thereby the interest returns, and indeed greatly increases. The message, though startling, is not

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yet perhaps clear and distinct. The writer is anxious to know more and to understand more clearly. He takes the pencil, asks further questions, and awaits more replies. Thus little by little the attraction grows, until it becomes a powerful fascination, which cannot be resisted.

But the tyranny the spirit exercises over his victims by means of this automatic writing is not only moral, but frequently physical. This is shown in the following manner. When a person has, by perseverance, become an adept at automatic writing, either with the planchette or by other means, he frequently finds that he is no longer free to use this power or not as he may choose, but that he really holds it at the disposal of the spirits themselves. For he is compelled to exercise it at any moment, convenient or inconvenient to himself, because he experiences an acute physical pain in the hand and arm, sometimes a great pain in the head, for which he soon learns that he can obtain immediate relief by placing his hand on the planchette, or by taking a pencil in the fingers, and submitting himself to write under spirit control. In this way persons lose their liberty and literally pass into complete slavery of the spirits, who are not slow to use the power they have gained, with complete disregard to the

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comfort or convenience of their victims. It needs only an artificial knowledge of the experiences of Spiritualists to be aware of this fact, for in spiritualistic literature you will find it frequently admitted that, having once evoked the spirits to communicate with them by means of automatic writing, persons have ended by passing under the domination of the spirits, and their own power of will is no longer sufficient to resist the power acquired over them. Some two years ago I was conversing with a lady, a non-Catholic, who frequenting séances had developed strong mediumistic powers. She told me that she soon acquired the power of automatic writing. This began by strongly attracting her, because of its novelty, and because she always hoped to obtain elevating messages from the spirits. Not very long time elapsed before she discovered that this power had gained a mastery over herself. At all times, day and night, she was compelled to have paper and pencil close at hand, for, it might be in the middle of the night, or it might be in the midst of a dinner-party, she would be seized by an intolerable pain in the hand and forearm, and she knew by experience that by beginning to write she could get immediate relief from the pain. In

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this matter of automatic writing, as well as in other ways, we fall into the power of spirits to our hurt and destruction.

The point I wish to impress upon you is that this condition of passivity contains a very grave danger. We dare not trifle with this great gift of free will, which God has bestowed upon us, as constituting our great dignity above all other creatures. We trifle with that gift at our peril. By cultivating this gift and using it as God intends, we become truly noble and great. By the gifts of intelligence and free will we are constituted in the image of God; by the proper use of these gifts we are intended to perfect that image and the sonship to which we are adopted, and to come to share in the Kingdom of Heaven. To such as hold sacred these great gifts, and who use them for the purpose for which they have been bestowed, God has said : ' You are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High.'¹ But if we trifle with those gifts and abuse them, they may become our degradation. For by evoking the spirits, which we are absolutely forbidden to do, and submitting to their conditions of not asserting our own intelligence and will, but suspending the exercise of them, or cultivating passivity, for the express

¹ Ps. lxxxi. 6.

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purpose of allowing them to impress their wills and intelligences upon us, we shall end in weakening our own wills and in losing power over ourselves. This has only to be continued for a time to become habitual, when we shall find that we are no longer capable of resisting. In a word, we shall have forfeited the freedom which belongs to the children of God, and shall have passed under a hard bondage to masters who are cruel and unrelenting in their hatred of us, for they hate us because we have upon us the mark of the sons of God. When this point is reached the man is truly obsessed. The evil spirits hover around him, and continually besiege him from without, losing no opportunity of gaining greater power over him. This obsession is the forerunner of actual possession, when the spirit inhabits the body itself, dwelling within, and the man's own personality counts for nothing. Another personality, *i.e.* of the spirit, takes possession of him, and rules over him both body and soul. When man accepts the condition laid down by the spirits, and cultivates passivity of mind, thereby for the time being laying aside his own personality, he gives the spirits exactly the opportunity they are seeking.

I would not have you imagine that I am

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making a charge against Spiritualism which Spiritualists themselves would indignantly repudiate. Of course it might easily happen that individual Spiritualists might repudiate a charge, not realising how perfectly true it is. But in regard to this point, viz. that communication with the unseen world may, and often does, result in ruin to both body and soul, by the invasion of both by spirit personalities, it is not only recognised by Spiritualists, but their literature frequently gives warning that this may occur, and precautions are suggested to prevent it. It is a common thing to see suggested that a séance should commence with prayer, asking God to protect the sitters from the invasion of evil and depraved spirits. This is a well-devised idea, because it is so likely to allay the fears of those who approach these séances more or less conscious that they are doing wrong. Surely it should be clear to every one that prayer to God asking protection, while doing that which is distinctly forbidden by Him, is of the nature of an insult added to the injury offered by disobedience to His law. What have evil spirits to fear from such a prayer? As well might the burglar pray for success and protection from the police and gaol before setting out upon his night's enterprise.

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Again, it is pitiable to hear how often those who act as mediums are ruined physically, both in mind and body. So pitilessly do the spirits use these unfortunate people, that they become so exhausted and wrecked as to be no longer of any use as mediums. Thus it is not uncommon for the spirits to tell the sitters to see to the medium, who has become quite prostrated and worn out, and not to let him or her act any more. Thus are the wretched victims left to be cast aside into an infirmary or an asylum for the rest of their natural lives.

You are familiar enough, from your knowledge of the gospel narrative, with the evil that was only too common among the people of Palestine, viz. the evil of possession by evil spirits. Throughout the gospel history there are many accounts of persons being possessed by evil spirits, and of our Divine Lord and His Apostles delivering the afflicted persons from these spirits possessing and controlling them. There are several which show clearly that this possession had reference not only to the minds and wills but to the bodies of the victims. We have the account which the father gave to our Divine Lord of the action of the possessing spirit upon his child. Here, without doubt, the evil spirits were at work. The whole

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narrative of the event, given by St. Mark, clearly classifies it as possession by a malignant spirit, apparently bent upon the destruction of the child. 'Master,' said the father to Jesus, 'I have brought my son to Thee having a dumb spirit. Who wheresoever he taketh him, dasheth him, and he foameth and gnasheth with the teeth, and he pineth away. . . . And they brought the child. And when Jesus had seen him, immediately the spirit troubled him, and being thrown down upon the ground he rolled about foaming.' And the father proceeding said: 'And oftentimes hath he cast him into the fire and into waters to destroy him. . . . And Jesus threatened the unclean spirit, saying to him, Deaf and dumb spirit, I command thee to go out of him, and enter no more into him. And crying out and greatly tearing him, he went out of him, and he became as dead, so that many said, He is dead. But Jesus taking him by the hand, lifted him up and he arose.'¹

The other case I take is that of the demoniac in the country of the Gadarenes. St. Mark's account runs as follows: 'And as He went out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the monuments a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling in the tombs, and

¹ St. Mark ix.

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no man could bind him not even with chains. For having been often bound with fetters and chains, he had burst the chains asunder and broken the fetters in pieces, and no man could tame him. And he was always day and night in the monuments and in the mountains, crying and cutting himself with stones. And seeing Jesus afar off he ran and adored Him. And crying out with a loud voice he said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God that Thou torment me not. For He said unto him, Go out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he saith to him, My name is Legion, for we are many.¹ From the multitude of instances which are recorded of our Divine Lord and of His disciples casting out devils, it is impossible for any believer to question the fact that demons did enter into possession of people, and so control them that they were no longer under the domination of their own free wills, and their own personalities, but under the control of another personality quite foreign to their own. Some say that it was a common popular superstition that attributed all illnesses to the work of demons, and that our Lord cured men

¹ St. Mark v.

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without disabusing them of their error. Such explanation is somewhat clumsy. Our Lord's method with these cases of possession was perfectly different to that used in ordinary bodily ailments or afflictions. These, such as palsy, leprosy, blindness, etc., our Lord cured by a use of almighty power ; in cases of possession He used authority. Moreover, there is evidently a personality present in these cases quoted above, because our Lord addresses this stranger personality, converses with it sometimes, commands it, and in the last instance gives it permission to enter the swine. These facts, instead of proving the existence of a superstition, rather prove the truth of the popular theory.

Now the question we ask ourselves is : Whether these things occur equally now. There are to be met persons who not only deny that they, as a fact, occur, but even go so far as to say that they are impossible. To deny that they are possible is a wholly gratuitous and a foolish statement. It is gratuitous, because if it is admitted that such things existed at one time, they were clearly possible at that time, and it becomes incumbent upon these persons to prove that what was, at one time, not only possible but actual has since become impossible. Moreover, such a statement is

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gratuitous because it is founded on assumption which is groundless. It clearly assumes that the evil spirits have ceased to rage in hatred against men, and now leave them in peace. Until such an assumption is proved, it is quite useless attempting to argue with these persons.

Again, people say that these cases mentioned above were not cases of possession but cases of lunacy, which can be accounted for naturally, and that, if such cases exist now, how is it that we do not see the afflicted victims among us, as did the inhabitants of Palestine in the time of our Lord?

In answer, I am quite willing to admit that these cases would be classified as lunacy or madness. In fact St. Matthew, in his account of the boy cured by our Lord immediately after the Transfiguration, calls him a lunatic. What we often call lunacy is not the consequence of any physical derangement of the organs of intelligence, but is just one of the effects of this possession. The invitation offered to spirits, by cultivating passivity of mind and will, in order to leave our minds and wills at the mercy of these spirits to impose upon them any impressions they wish, ends in their entering into possession and controlling them. Thus we should no longer be the controlling

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agents, at least not at all times, but at any moment, and for periods shorter or longer, the spirits become the controlling agents, and through their agency the mind is filled with delusions.

It is quite true that these victims are not now seen in our midst as they were of old, because, according to our modern methods, they are hurried away into asylums. In saying these things I am not drawing upon my imagination. That spirit communication results not unfrequently in producing all the symptoms of madness is a well-recognised fact among spiritualistic circles, and in spiritualistic literature it is admitted and lamented over. The spirits manifesting to Mr. Stainton-Moses admit the fact that many mediums are shut up in mad-houses. This they lament over, and, not unnaturally, assert to be an injustice.¹

This fact is also witnessed to by others. There is perhaps no better authority on lunacy and its causes to be found than Dr. Forbes Winslow. The words of such an authority are well worth quoting. So much attention did he give to the connection between madness and Spiritualism, that he wrote a book called *Spiritualistic Madness*. From that I quote the

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 23.

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following words: 'Ten thousand unfortunate people are at this present time (1877) confined in lunatic asylums on account of having tampered with the supernatural.' And quoting an American journal, he goes on to say: 'Not a week passes in which we do not hear that some of these unfortunates destroy themselves by suicide, or are removed to a lunatic asylum. The mediums often manifest signs of an abnormal condition of their mental faculties, and among certain of them are found unequivocal indications of true demoniacal possession. The evil spreads rapidly, and it will produce in a few years frightful results. . . . Two French authors of spiritualistic works (who wrote *Le monde Spirituel*, and *Sauvons le genre humain*) died insane in an asylum; these two men were distinguished in their respective professions: one as a highly scientific man, the other as an advocate well learned in the law. These individuals placed themselves in communication with the spirits by means of tables. I could quote many such instances where men of the highest ability have, so to speak, neglected all and followed the doctrines of Spiritualism only to end their days in the lunatic asylums.'

These words were written thirty years ago. Since that time Spiritualism has made enormous

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strides, ever widening its sphere of action, and gathering every year more and more people into its embrace. So, likewise, during that same period, madness has increased by leaps and bounds, so that at the present time it is one of the most difficult problems which public authority has to meet and solve, to find sufficient accommodation for the constantly growing number of these unfortunate people. It would be a question well worthy of the attention of Society, whether these practices of Spiritualism are not largely responsible for this enormous increase in our lunatic population.

The testimony of this eminent authority of thirty years ago is amply confirmed at this present time. Only a few weeks ago, I was speaking to a physician who had himself been in medical charge of an asylum, and he had exactly the same story to tell, viz. that a considerable proportion of those who are confined in our asylums are there in consequence of dabbling in Spiritualism. He added that in his own practice, during the previous six months, he had had quite twenty cases of insanity arising entirely from this cause.

Doctors, of course, have no other name for this possession of the mind by the spirits than madness. Demoniactal possession they do not,

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as a rule, acknowledge nor recognise. These unfortunate victims show undoubtedly every symptom of madness, or of irresponsible conduct, and frequently are a danger to themselves and others, and there seems no other course open than to commit them to asylums, where they may be cared for and rendered harmless. Only a short time ago there was a serious case of real possession in this parish. It was the case of a lady medium, a non-Catholic. She had been most solemnly warned, five years previously, by a Catholic friend, that possession would be the probable result of her mediumship. This she dreaded, but still the fascination of spirit intercourse held her so strongly that in spite of her dread she continued. At last the evil manifested itself. She knew perfectly what had happened, and, by a curious instinct, she sent for a priest, and likewise said that the one who could help her much was the Catholic friend who had previously warned her. I was able to find him and send him to her. In her calmer moments she accepted the advice of priest and friend, and with them prayed most earnestly to be delivered. Her paroxysms of frenzy and violence were terrible to behold, and the doctor who attended her had but one remedy to suggest,

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viz. the asylum. Fortunately, by the power of prayer, she was relieved, and recovered her own personality completely. She is now most thoroughly alarmed, and has determined never again to consent to this spirit intercourse; nevertheless she realises her great danger for the future, and lives in dread of similar seizures.

Therefore I feel no difficulty in agreeing that these cases of possession amount to lunacy, but it is a lunacy arising from the fact that the spirits have responded to the invitation given to them in Spiritualism, and have entered in and taken possession of the mind, so that it is henceforth at all times subject to the abnormal impressions imposed upon it by the spirits, who often appear to take fiendish delight in making sport of their victims.

To show that possession is a fact in these days of ours, I will narrate to you an instance, for the truth of which I can vouch. This I give in answer to those who tell us that no such cases of violent possession of the human body as are mentioned in the New Testament are to be seen now. Such a statement shows an entire ignorance of facts that are occurring around us. Some four years ago, an Australian gentleman came over to England in order to undergo a surgical operation. For this object

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he entered a nursing home. It happened that this home was kept by a Catholic nurse, and certain Catholic charitable ladies were in the habit of visiting the home to help to comfort the patients by their sympathy, and by reading to them. There is no need to give this gentleman's name. He was a pleasant-mannered man, and very grateful for all kindness shown to him. But it was soon noticed that there was something strange and uncanny in his behaviour. He would never answer a question until he had consulted some unseen person, who apparently was always with him, when he would repeat the answer suggested to him as if it was his own. He was questioned as to what this meant. He made no hesitation whatever in saying that he had for years been in the habit of consulting the spirits, and that there was a spirit habitually with him, without whose advice he did nothing. The people at the home, not unnaturally, became alarmed, and remonstrated with him for thus handing himself over to an unseen and unknown agent. He seemed rather amused than otherwise. They suggested that he should have an interview with a Catholic gentleman who had had considerable experience of Spiritualism, and from this gentleman I received all the par-

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ticulars of what happened. The patient consented to the interview, and at an appointed time my friend went to the home. No sooner did he enter the patient's room than he was thrown violently to the ground. Curiously enough, the patient seemed immediately to understand what had happened, and apologised, saying that *he* (the spirit) had not acted like that for years. This did not dismay my friend, who had had similar experiences. He began talking to the patient, putting to him how very wrong and unworthy it was of him to give himself up to the control of an agent of whom he knew nothing. His answer was, that he had got along very well under this guidance; that the controlling spirit had advised him in all his commercial undertakings, and that under his guidance he had become a very prosperous man, and that he wished nothing better than that. My friend saw him frequently, and among other things proposed that he (the patient) should have an interview with Cardinal Vaughan, to whom he had already reported the case, and who was willing to receive him. At first the controlling spirit made fierce opposition, but after the invitation was several times repeated the spirit answered that he might go, but it would be all to no purpose.

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An appointment was made, and on the day arranged my friend took the patient in a carriage to the Cardinal's house. The Cardinal was in the reception room with five or six priests, when the Australian gentleman came in. Then occurred a surprising thing.

No sooner was the visitor shown into the presence of the Cardinal than his control seemed to be moved with rage, which vented itself upon the body of this unfortunate man. An extraordinary change came over him. His own personality, which was uniformly courteous and refined, no longer dominated him, but another personality, entirely strange to himself, —coarse, violent, demoniacal—took possession of him. His whole appearance was altered ; he seemed to shrink to a withered old man ; his face indicated a frenzy of rage, his eyes started from his head, and he literally foamed at the mouth, and there came from him a torrent of foul, disgusting, and obscene language, of terribly blasphemous insults to God and of coarse abuse of religion, church, and priesthood. Such ideas and language were quite foreign to the man, for his normal self was ignorant of them. All present were horror-stricken at the scene and seemed paralysed. Then the paroxysm passed off ; the man's normal person-

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ality once more asserted itself, and he became conscious of his surroundings. Perceiving the look of horror upon the faces of all present, the man at once suspected that there was something wrong, and, in his natural courteous manner, expressed a hope that nothing unpleasant had happened. He was told that his control had been there, and had been behaving in a very disgusting manner. He was very genuinely distressed, and expressed great regret. The Cardinal then entered into conversation with him, and spoke very seriously of the danger he was in ; the patient was thoroughly alarmed, and was evidently desirous to withdraw from the spirit intercourse which had resulted in his having been used as an instrument for displaying such demoniacal frenzy and hatred. The Cardinal asked him to come again in a week's time, and he readily consented. He also consented to recite daily two prayers, one to St. Joseph and one to St. Michael, which the Cardinal gave him. This he did, and, strange to say, during that week the man was left in perfect peace, and no spirit seemed to be present. The day came round for the second visit, when early in the morning the spirit communicated, and told his victim that his affairs in Australia were in a

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most critical position, requiring his immediate presence, and that unless he took the boat that was leaving England that very day for Australia, he would be a ruined man. He at once left London and took the boat. Thus was lost the grace that was offered to him, and which might have resulted in his deliverance from the slavery into which he had fallen.

This result is also a confirmation of the fact, that once this tyranny is exercised over man it is a matter of extreme difficulty to get clear of it.

This is to be noticed also in the case of Mr. D. D. Home, one of the most remarkable spiritualistic mediums, and, I suppose, the greatest wonder-worker of modern mediums. At one time he had terrible experiences under the control of spirits, and in his alarm determined to rid himself of the nuisance. He became a Catholic. The spirits manifested great anger at the step he took, but finally said that they would leave him in peace for a year, and declared that after that they would return. Accordingly Home had peace for a year, during which he abstained from any intercourse with the spirits. At the end of the year it happened that Napoleon III., feeling curious in the matter of Spiritualism, and hearing what an excellent

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medium Mr. Home was, invited him to Paris to hold a séance in his presence. Apparently Mr. Home was so flattered at an invitation reaching him from the Emperor, that all his resolutions to quit Spiritualism melted away, and he consented to hold a séance, and so spirit intercourse was once more entered into, and the old attraction took possession of him.

This result of communication with spirits, viz. the possession of the mind and will by some controlling spirit to the loss of control over one's own will and mind, is a common consequence of Spiritualism.

Now returning once more to that principle, viz. 'By their fruits you shall know them,' let us apply it to the spirits who manifest to the devotees of Spiritualism ; communication with whom proves that they are liars and never to be depended on in anything they say ; communication with whom results in the complete loss of Christian faith, and consequent severance from Christianity ; communication with whom results in domination by the spirit over mind and body to the complete ruin of the victim bodily and mentally: can it be possible, I ask, that these spirits are divinely appointed to guide us to a knowledge of God, and of our duties and obligations to

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Him, and to a closer and more intimate union with Him?

The alternative question I put is this : Does it not rather appear that these spirits are demoniacal, raging with hatred against men, and bent upon their ruin and destruction by leading them as far as possible away from God?

The answer to these questions I can safely leave to your own intelligence.

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SERMON VI

SPIRIT TEACHING COMPARED WITH CHRISTIAN TEACHING

‘Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached, let him be anathema. As we said before, so now I say again: if any one preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema.

‘For I give you to understand, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For neither did I receive it of man, nor did I learn it; but by revelation of Jesus Christ.’—GALATIANS i. 8, *seq.*

No doubt you remember my saying, in a former instruction, that even if the theory of certain sceptics, denying the existence and reality of the phenomena of the séance room, was established, the position which I assumed would remain unshaken; because, independently of certain practices, there is promulgated by Spiritualism a code of teaching and of doctrine which is destructive of Christianity, so that looked at merely from the point of

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view of its teaching, it still remains true that Spiritualism is incompatible and irreconcilable with Christianity. In this last instruction it is to the spiritualistic teaching that I shall confine myself. Already several allusions have been made to this fact, especially when I showed you that one of the fruits of Spiritualism was the loss of faith which occurred in Christians who entered upon this spirit intercourse. This incompatibility between the two will be placed beyond all doubt when you know what that teaching is. It is of the utmost importance that this should be made clear to you, because, as a rule, persons who begin to dabble in Spiritualism have not the remotest idea whither it is going to lead them. The common notion is that they will meet with an exciting communication with the spirits of the dead, whereby it may be possible to gather some knowledge of how it fares with those of our loved ones who have gone over, to use a spiritualistic phrase, and what we ourselves may expect to find there. People do not realise that Spiritualism is a religion, and that very soon they will hear definite teaching concerning the future life which implicitly contains the denial of all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

When, however, you know what that teach-

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ing is, you will have a sure solid fact upon which to form a judgment. You may shut your eyes to the evidence that exists to prove the reality of the wonders of the séance rooms, but to the doctrine you cannot shut your eyes. That can be seen in black and white, and can be read by any one who wishes, and when seen and read becomes a self-evident fact which cannot be denied without renouncing our senses and our reason.

I can easily understand that the statement just made, viz. that Spiritualism possesses a distinct code of doctrine, may appear to you to be in contradiction to former statements saying that every possible contradictory doctrine is advanced by the Spiritualists ; so that having no unity of truth among them they cannot be believed, since contradictories cannot stand together.

For if it can be said that these spirits have a code of teaching, it would seem to follow that there must be some unity and agreement among them. Though there seems to be some contradiction here, it is really only apparent ; but it is certainly due to you that, before proceeding, the apparent contradiction should be cleared away.

In the teaching of the spirits we can dis-

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tinguish two sides : first, a negative or destructive side, and secondly, a positive side.

As to the negative side, wherein every truth of revealed Christianity is called into question or absolutely denied, there seems complete unanimity among these manifesting spirits. Of course this negative side cannot be called a teaching, but the fact that the spirits agree so unanimously in this wholesale negation is in no way opposed to the statement that their positive teaching is full of contradictions.

To myself it seems amply sufficient to show that the spirits are in complete agreement in denying our Christian doctrines. Our essential and fundamental doctrines are for us fixed and immovable principles, which may not be called into question nor controverted among ourselves. As a geometrician would resent the supreme folly of one who would propose to revise the axioms of his science, because they are self-evident, so we recoil at once from any attempt to revise our fundamental principles, 'infallible axioms and precepts of sacred truth,' because they rest upon the authority of God.

It pleases and flatters the restless human mind to think that Christian teaching should be brought 'up to date.' This is without

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doubt true of scientific truths, which must ever progress as the scientific man is continually discovering new facts, which must be accounted for, and may require that principles even must be revised, but the fundamental Christian truths are revealed to us by Divine Wisdom, not for particular ages and periods, or for particular nations or circumstances, for God reveals eternal truths, which are ever up to date, and are as unchangeable as the Eternal Wisdom whence they spring. Therefore the fact that Spiritualism denies these unchangeable truths should suffice to make us recoil from such a system as necessarily false and delusive.

But to return to the positive side I find that even among a multitude of contradictions there is a certain amount of agreement among Spiritualists, inasmuch as the denial of our doctrines seems necessarily to compel them to accept the propositions contradictory to those they deny.

What however concerns us mostly is that although, if you take the declarations of manifesting spirits in different countries throughout the world, you will certainly meet with endless contradictions on any given point, here, in England, you will certainly meet with a con-

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siderable unanimity in *positive spiritualistic teaching*. That comes about in this way.

One of the most celebrated 'Sensitives' that Spiritualism has ever known was an Englishman, whom I have several times mentioned, viz. Mr. Stainton-Moses. He has written voluminously upon many aspects of Spiritualism, but he has done what I believe no one else has done, that is, he has written a book with the object of recording the positive teaching of the spirits. This book he calls *Spirit Teaching*. It has a peculiar interest, and we may say, great authority, because it is not his own personal composition, inasmuch as it was written automatically in response to direct questions. Mr. Moses held his pencil in writing position over the paper, and under spirit-control his hand moved, and he had no idea what was being written until he read the completed manuscript.

Hence it is a spirit-written book, and holds among Spiritualists a position not unlike that which the Bible holds amongst us, as the inspired work of the Holy Ghost.

These facts account for a large amount of agreement among Spiritualists in England in positive teaching, and it is that to which I invite your attention to-day.

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It is pitiable to read in *Spirit Teaching* of the fight that Stainton-Moses makes for his faith, and to see the feeble manner in which he succumbs to worthless arguments and accepts the teaching of the spirits. Again and again he objects to this teaching. He says of himself that when this intercourse began he 'was what would be called a sound High Churchman.'¹ Naturally, the teaching he met with in Spiritualism was repulsive. Among other things he objects to the spirits that 'Spirit statements were incompatible with the received teaching of Orthodox Churches . . . and traversed some cardinal dogmas of the Christian faith.'² When Imperator says that there is much in Christian teaching which is rubbish, and must be cleared away before the real truth can be taught, Stainton-Moses objects that 'the rubbish which you seem to me to be clearing away is precisely what Christians have agreed in all ages to consider cardinal doctrines of faith ;'³ or again, 'Your teaching is pure and beautiful, but surely it is not Christian ;'⁴ or again, 'That such a creed (spirit creed) would not be acknowledged as Christian by any member of a Christian church : that

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 53.

² *Idem*, p. 59.

³ *Idem*, p. 59.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 61.

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it was contradictory to the plain words of the Bible ; and such views appeared even to be the subject of especial denunciation as those of Antichrist . . . that they took the backbone out of faith.'¹ Again, 'The central dogmas seemed specially attacked, and it was that which startled me.'² Evidently Mr. Moses was quite alive to the fact that Spiritualism was destructive of Christianity. Under these circumstances it is no wonder that we find him saying that 'the outcome of Spiritualism is bad in the mass,' and that it was destructive of all his lifelong beliefs, which had held the world, with all its greatest intellects, for eighteen centuries, and had raised it from paganism and idolatry to the purity of Christian morality.

Mr. Moses is always trying to identify these spirit controls, that he might at least know with whom he was dealing, but always to be balked or deceived. He can get no satisfactory answer from Imperator, and consequently tries at another circle and from other spirits to obtain knowledge of the personality of Imperator. On one occasion Stainton-Moses, comparing his position with what it used to be as a Christian, complains :

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 72.

² *Idem*, p. 101.

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‘I am so far worse off that I have only an impersonal influence to deal with . . . I have nothing to lay hold of. All around me I see Spiritualism vague, and frequently contemptible in its utterances. Its revelations are shadowy when they are not silly ; and frequently one is shocked by that which passes current under its name . . . on the whole I wish you would leave me alone.’¹ No wonder we find him remonstrating : ‘But you all seem leagued to bewilder us.’²

Again and again Stainton-Moses demanded some proof of the claim of the spirits that they are commissioned by God with a message to men. He says : ‘I shrank from accepting such momentous issues on the *ipse dixit* of an intelligence of whom I knew, and could know, so little.’³ He presses his demand, putting forward the fact that Jesus Christ gave such proofs, clearly displaying such splendid credentials. In answer, the spirit has the effrontery to say that he was acting in the same way as Jesus Christ. The words of Imperator in answer to the objection of Stainton-Moses are these : ‘Jesus was at Jerusalem at the Feast of the Dedication, and the old question was

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 110.

² *Idem*, p. 138.

³ *Idem*, p. 101.

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put by the Jews, "If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." They wished for a sign as you wish for some resolution of your doubts. He referred them, as we have referred you, to the works and tenor of His teaching, as evidences of its Divine origin.'¹ What are the works of the spirits showing the Divine origin of their teaching? Stainton-Moses' great complaint was that there were *no* works; 'I have nothing to lay hold of,' and that he could get nothing but words which he had to receive upon the '*ipse dixit* of an intelligence of which he knew, and could know, so little.' Works, acts, deeds were the very things he sought for and could never get.

Herein is the enormous difference. Jesus Christ said, 'A sign shall not be given *but* the sign of Jonas the Prophet.' Thereby, as our Lord distinctly tells us, referring to the Resurrection. The Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was a Divine work, the work which was above all others Divine, and the greatest credential of Christ's claim to be God, and therefore of His right to be heard. Throughout His whole life Christ was performing works, and to these He persistently appealed as the foundation of His claim. 'If I do not

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 138.

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the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though you will not believe Me, believe the works : that you may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father.' ¹ And our Lord sums up all in these words : ' Unless I had done the works which no other man hath done, they would not have sin : ' ² *i.e.* their disbelief had been without blame.

For the works of the spirits we know not where to look, unless it be to the 'fruits' which we have indicated. As to the 'tenor of their teaching,' we have seen how it presented itself to the mind of Stainton-Moses. And to such reasoning as this he succumbs, and renounces his life's faith in Christianity ; and yet it is he who tells men that in this intercourse with the spirits they must 'keep a level head.'

We will now, ourselves, make inquiry into the tenor of their teaching.

To state the basis upon which the greater part of spirit teaching rests, I must draw your attention to the fact that the spirits have cunningly adopted the main principle of Evolution, and have introduced it, so to speak, into the spirit sphere. In passing, we may be excused if we wonder whether this fact has not

¹ St. John x. 37, 38.

² St. John xv. 24.

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proved a fascination to the many men of science who have been led to examine and accept the existence of a spirit world, even in spite of the fact that they have been compelled to admit the untrustworthiness of spirit utterances.

This main idea of Evolution has an immediate effect upon the teaching. A fundamental fact in Evolution is, that God is eliminated from this physical world. The evolutionist will not give a place to God in the material universe. All things have worked out to their present perfection, and are even now progressing to a still higher perfection, not by the direction of God, Creator and Maintainer, but by natural law, which works automatically.

It seems to our minds unreasonable to talk about a law and to deny a lawgiver, but it is not my purpose now to inquire into the reasonableness of the theory of Evolution. My object at this moment is to point out that Spiritualism eliminates God from the spiritual world, just as the evolutionist eliminates Him from the natural world.

One of the first teachings infused into Spiritualists concerns the state of the soul or spirit in the next life. This is but natural,

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because persons entering séances, for the first time, usually have for their object to get into communication with the spirits of departed friends. Hence one of the first questions they put to any manifesting spirit concerns its welfare. This at once gives the opportunity of inculcating a teaching which strikes at the very root of Christianity and the Church, and which eliminates God from the life of the spirit. The first principle insisted upon is as follows. The spirit of a man, leaving this mortal life, and entering into the next life, does not change its moral character. If the soul has on earth led a good, just, and pure life, it at once enters into a sphere of spirit life wherein it meets other spirits similar to itself. If, on the other hand, the soul has, in this mortal life, been earthly, unjust, untruthful, and impure, at death it enters into a low sphere of the spirit world, in which it meets other spirits, evil and depraved as itself. In that new life its moral tone will be similar to that which it cultivated in this life ; it will delight in evil and revel in sin : it will actually continue its evil ways, and indeed may even develop the evil which is in it, and fall to lower spheres of degradation. In no sense does physical death bring finality with it. Progress towards higher

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things continues in the spirit life as in this. The pure and the just, entering into a high sphere, are led by communication with spirits, with whom they mingle, to higher knowledge and perfection, always progressing to higher spirit spheres. On the other hand, the depraved and evil-living souls, although in all the evil and depraved surroundings of spirits like unto themselves, will sooner or later enter upon an upward progress to better things. This change begins apparently with some feeling of remorse and self-reproach. This will be the beginning of better things. This upward progress once begun will continue, and by degrees the depraved spirit will retrace its steps, and in the end will purge itself of evil. This progress may take millions of years, but it is only a question of time, when the depraved sinner will reach the highest grade of perfection, and enjoy a happiness equal to that of the purest and holiest of souls.

What is of supreme importance is to notice how, according to Spiritualists, this is done. How are we to account for the fact that in this mortal life some souls are pure, and holy, and just? How, on the other hand, are we to account for the fact that some souls are unjust, untruthful, impure? According to evolu-

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tionists this all occurs in consequence of natural dispositions and tendencies, heredity and environments, it is not to be attributed to the operation of the Grace of God ; nor is the soul unjust and impure by reason of its rejection of the Grace of God. All this good or evil is worked out by a law of nature. According to Spiritualists, the progress of the depraved soul in the spirit world, from the lowest levels of iniquity and depravity to the greatest heights of holiness and happiness, is merely a matter of evolution, the working out of a natural law, by which the circumstances and surroundings in which the soul finds itself work upon it and draw it with them, without any credit to it for its advance. The whole realm of Grace is ignored. Thus, as I have said, God is completely eliminated from the spiritual world, and all its workings by Spiritualists, as God is eliminated from the material world by evolutionists. Some Spiritualists seem to question whether there is a God at all, and many certainly doubt whether the spirits of men will ever see God.

Now, let us pause a moment and see what relation this teaching has to the teaching of Christianity.

In this teaching there is no place for a

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Saviour. The Christian idea of a Saviour is part of the 'rubbish' which must be cleared away. Imperator says: 'We would have you know that the spiritual ideal of Jesus, the Christ, is no more like the human notion, with its accessories of atonement and redemption, as men have grasped them, than was the calf, ignorantly carved by the ancient Hebrews, like to God who strove to reveal Himself to them.'¹ Indeed the whole spirit life is on the natural plane, and not on the supernatural plane at all, and consequently there is no question of any direct intervention of God beyond the natural law. That Jesus Christ should have died for the sins of the world, to make satisfaction to God by His vicarious sacrifice, is, according to Spiritualists, an idea dishonouring to Him. The true atonement was 'not, indeed, a reconciliation of sin-stained humanity to an angry and holy God, purchased by the sacrifice of His sinless Son, but a higher and truer atonement in the ennobling of the nature and the purifying of the spirit.'²

In this teaching there is no room for the office of judge of the world. That Jesus Christ is the judge of the world is denied, even though our Lord so clearly and em-

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 70.

² *Idem*, p. 70.

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phatically declared that this was His office. St. Peter, instructing Cornelius the Centurion and his household, put forward this teaching as that which must be believed if they wished to share in the merits of Christ. 'And Jesus commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is He who has been appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.'¹

Imperator says: 'Judgment, too, is ceaseless, for the soul is ever fitting itself for its change. There is no such arraignment before the assembled universe as in your mind. That is an allegory.'

Again, in this spirit teaching there is no adequate punishment of sin which outrages the infinite Majesty of God. That follows of necessity from what has been said concerning the unceasing advance towards perfection, which is occurring even in the greatest sinner and the most depraved soul. The spirits wrote through the instrumentality of Stainton-Moses, 'We know of no hell, save that within the soul; a hell which is fed by the fire of unpurified lust and passion, which is kept alive by remorse and agony of sorrow . . . and from which there is no escape, except in retracing the steps, and

¹ Acts x. 42.

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in cultivating the qualities which shall bear fruit in love and knowledge of God.'

Moreover it would seem that the spirits have nothing to tell us about the Christian teaching of the nature of the reward promised for good and holy living. The Christian revelation teaches us that we are destined to the Beatific Vision; that we shall gaze upon the infinite beauty of God; and that we shall share the kingdom of heaven with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known.'¹ 'To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne.'² When Stainton-Moses inquired of his spirit control whether he had seen God, although he had declared himself to be a spirit sent from the highest spirit sphere to guide men, he replied that he had never seen God, nor had he, during all the ages he had spent in these high spheres, ever encountered a spirit who had seen God. Indeed he seems, by his words, to be in doubt whether spirits will ever enter into the immediate presence of God.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

² Apocalypse iii. 21.

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I can easily imagine that this teaching of the Spiritualists fills you with some astonishment, because it seems so inconsistent. For if the Spiritualists believe in Christ, and use the Scriptures to enforce their teaching, how is it that they can fail to see that in these sacred writings, the judgment by the Son of God, the punishment of sinners by their eternal separation from God, and the reward of good living by the Vision of God, are plainly taught? When, however, you realise what their teaching is concerning Scripture and the person of Jesus Christ, you will understand that they are more consistent than at first appears.

Concerning God Himself: the Spiritualistic teaching is very agnostic. The thorough Spiritualist will say that he knows nothing, and can know nothing. He will tell you that all the received views concerning God are subjective, existing solely in the minds of men, without anything objective corresponding to them, and that they are entirely manufactured out of man's conceptions of himself. He teaches that the human mind, in its limited powers, is incapable in its present stage of development, of penetrating this mystery, and of apprehending the truth, even if it were revealed. Ages and ages of constant development must pass before

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man will be able, in any appreciable degree, to acquire this knowledge of God. Perhaps he will never know. Although many varieties of this view of God may be found among spirits manifesting in different parts of the world, yet all are wonderfully unanimous in denying that there is any truth whatever in the historic Christian doctrine concerning the nature and character of God.

Concerning Scripture : the spirits teach that the Bible, as we now possess it, is mostly a mass of accretions, made by an unscrupulous priesthood, for their own ends, so that what truth lies in it is so overladen with errors, that it is well-nigh impossible to find it. No proof is offered for these statements, though one would have thought that, according to their own account of themselves, they would have been able to indicate the portions that have been so added, the persons who have added them, and the precise times in which the additions were made. They have immense knowledge, accumulated through immense periods of time, and they have capacities for drawing upon the knowledge of other spirits of equally great knowledge and experience as themselves. One would think that among

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these spirits there would be ample knowledge of all these accretions to the sacred writings, which we offer as historical documents, to be tested as the works of Aristotle or any other author are tested. And if these spirits are animated with such an intense desire of disseminating truth, they might afford us the means of detecting these frauds in the Bible to better purpose than confusing the minds of men with mere unsupported statements, which are at variance with the historical evidence existing for these writings in their present form. This teaching is really an insult to the reason of Christians. For Christians accept the Scriptures in their present form upon solid historical evidence, the like of which can be advanced for no other ancient book: this historic evidence has been accepted, through thousands of years, by all the greatest intellects, as well as universally by all men; they have the most complete historical evidence of the existence of Jesus Christ, and of all the splendid magnificent credentials that He offered, proving the truth of the claim He made to be God. And the Spiritualists ask us to set these Scriptures aside as misleading human productions, and upon what grounds? On the unsupported word of spirits, whom no one has ever seen, of

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whose identity nothing can be discovered ; who claim our faith without deigning to offer one single credential to show that they have been divinely sent and commissioned ; and before these spirits we are expected to bow down our intellects and give faith, even though times without number they have been found to be so untruthful as to be compared only with ‘ Satan clothed in light.’

What have these spirits to teach us concerning our Divine Lord Jesus Christ? It is in this doctrine that we come face to face with the blasphemy of spiritualistic teaching. In a word, the spirits deny the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. They admit, of course, the existence of the historic Christ, but deny that he was the Son of God, except in an analogical sense, which applies equally to ourselves. Spirits will say that they believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ even as we believe. On being pressed, it will be found that they do not believe that He is the Son of God in a special unique sense, being one substance with God the Father, but that He was Son of God in the same sense in which we are all the sons of God, for there is a spark of the Divine in all men. He is merely a seer, a prophet. He was a most perfect

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medium. He was one of the very highest spirits, an angel, who became incarnate. Previous to His incarnation He was a spirit inhabiting the highest spirit spheres, who was sent by God to instruct mortal man and to be a model for his imitation. In the spirit sphere from which He came He possessed the highest knowledge and wisdom. So ethereal was His body that it did not overcloud or blind the sense of spirit, so that He retained all His ancient knowledge and He was able to teach men high and heavenly truths, and although inhabiting a body He was still able to converse with the high angels of the sphere to which He belonged. He perfectly remembered all His spirit-wisdom, and all His perfect knowledge of secondary material causes, and by that wisdom and knowledge was able to cure the leper, and do wonderful things, which were not in the true sense miracles, but only the working out of secondary causes, of which He had a knowledge so much greater than other men. Those works were not done because He possessed the attributes and exercised the power of God. Thus He was a man immensely in advance of His age. His passion and death were not works by which He redeemed the world. The whole idea of real

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shedding of blood, and of Christ surrendering His life in atonement for men's sin, and in satisfaction of Divine Justice, the spirits declare to be abhorrent and monstrous. The idea of atonement upon the cross is of man's devising, not God's. Christ did die for man, but not in the Christian sense, but in the sense in which many reformers die for the people: namely, He had a truth, a message from God to deliver to man, and He willingly died in witness to that truth. Christ's death, then, is upon an equal footing with the death of General Gordon, who died in the execution of the duty confided to him by his country. The spirits say: 'Little do men grasp the significance of the truth to which they carelessly give utterance when they say that Christ came into the world to die for it. He did so come, but in the sense of these enthusiasts He came not. The drama of Calvary was of man's, not God's, devising.'

Again: 'The spirit creed does not recognise any need of propitiation towards God. It rejects, as false, any notion of a Divine being vindictively punishing a transgressor or requiring a vicarious sacrifice for us.'¹ Equally opposed are the spirits to the idea of the merits of Christ, which are applied to the soul, assert-

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 54.

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ing that man stands alone in his responsibility for his deeds, and must work out his own salvation and atone for his own sins.

When we come to the teaching of Spiritualists on the resurrection, we certainly meet a variety of views, though on one point they are unanimous, for all alike reject and repudiate the Christian teaching. The most usual opinions among them are, either that the body of Jesus Christ was disposed of by some of His disciples; and this in spite of the historic evidence that the grave was carefully watched over by a Roman guard, and the tomb sealed to prevent this very fraud; or that the real body was dissipated in the grave, and that the body in which Jesus Christ appeared during forty days was a simple materialisation, or astral body, such as is seen any day at Spiritualistic séances.

Let us again pause a moment and see what such teaching as this involves in the mind of every Christian. (1) To deny Christ's Divinity and to assert that He was but pure man, even holy and exalted above all other men, is an absolutely impossible position. One hardly likes to utter the truth concerning these statements for fear of appearing to be impious. Of the charge of impiety I am sure you will exonerate me. As a matter of fact there are

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only two possible alternatives with regard to our Lord Jesus Christ. He was either God, or He was the most terrible impostor this world has ever known. He could not have been merely a great and holy man, for He undoubtedly claimed to be God. To make such a false claim can by no possible means be reconciled with exalted holiness. In our own times we have seen men putting forward extravagant claims to be some great prophet of old, and we have seen the scorn and disgust with which they are regarded, being considered as blasphemous impostors.

(2) Moreover, the impiety would not cease there. We have the most undoubted historic evidence that His claim was supported by miracles, wrought for the express purpose of proving His claim. When the man sick of the palsy was brought to Him on a bed at Capharnaum, Jesus spoke to the sick man saying: 'Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee.' At once the Scribes, who were sitting there, recognised that to forgive sin was a Divine work, and that none save God could forgive sin; so that if Jesus claimed to be able to forgive sin He thereby necessarily claimed to be God. Now, because the Scribes had these thoughts in their minds, and consequently

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were questioning His claim to Divinity, a miracle was wrought in order to convince them that that claim was founded on the truth. Therefore Jesus said : ' Why think you these things in your hearts ? Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy : Thy sins are forgiven thee ; or to say : Arise, take up thy bed and walk ? But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the man sick of the palsy), I say to thee : Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thy house.'¹ Those present were at once convinced by this manifestation of power, exercised to confirm the claim of Jesus Christ to be Divine : ' So that all wondered and glorified God, saying : We never saw the like.' If therefore it is said that Christ was not God, but falsely put forward a claim to Divinity, we must admit that God either exercised, or permitted to be exercised, a supernatural power, in order to co-operate with an imposture, supporting and confirming it by miracles.

Some Spiritualists, among them Stainton-Moses, writing under his control, maintain, in face of the clear words of Scripture, that Christ never made the claim to be God. In answer I would ask : (1) Who is most likely to have

¹ St. Mark ii. 8.

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penetrated the meaning of the utterances of Jesus Christ, our wise men of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, or the men of His own time, Jews of every nation, and Romans alike? They heard His words, repeated time after time ; they saw His words confirmed by wonders such as no other man had ever done ; works and words repeated throughout the length and breadth of Palestine, and friends and foes alike agree unanimously as to the meaning His words conveyed. All alike understand Him to put forward the claim to be God. Some heard with gentle, humble, and docile hearts, and upon them descended the illuminating grace of faith from the Father of Light, and bowing down their intellects and admitting the truth they cried out, ‘ Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God ’ ; and these have, through all the ages since, been blessed and honoured by men as the holy ones of God. Some, enemies and foes, were blinded : the Romans, by fear lest this King should be a rival : the Jews, by prejudice, because they had set their minds upon an earthly kingdom, and upon their restoration among the nations of the world ; and being blinded, saw not the truth of the claim which they knew He was making, so Pharisees and High Priest cried to

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the people, saying : ' You have heard His blasphemy. What think ye ? ' and they answered and said, ' He is guilty of death : crucify Him, crucify Him.' And these have been, through all the ages since, the scorn and contempt of all men. Thus friend and foe alike acknowledged that He made the claim, and all the world has approved of those who admitted the truth of the claim, and has condemned them that refused to admit it.

One thing is clear, that either by accepting it, or by refusing to accept it, they all equally admit that the claim was made. Seeing then that both friends and foes, who heard our Lord's words and saw His works, admit that the claim was made, what are we to think of this statement of the spirits, made eighteen hundred years after the events ?

(2) Again, if Christ died not for sinners, and if man has been left with the whole burden of sin upon him, and has to take upon himself the whole atonement and satisfaction for all his offences, then that instinct, which is in his very nature, which teaches him his own helplessness, and bids him look for help from on high, is utterly at fault and a horrible mockery. If the good and merciful God could leave His weak, sinning creatures to their doom, and not

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hold out to them a helping hand in their misery, even though it is of their own making, then the estimate we should form of God would sink below that which we form of man. For the father and the mother would sacrifice all for the welfare of the child ; perhaps even more eagerly for the erring child, that it may be raised from despair, and helped once more to walk uprightly ; the friend would come to the rescue of the friend with goods, and even with life ; indeed the very stranger will risk his life to save another, merely because he shares his own nature, and more than this no one can do. If God has put this instinct of noble self-sacrifice into the breast of His creature to help the fallen and the helpless, can we imagine that a God who is merciful and infinitely good will allow His poor, fallen creature to lie wounded, and sore stricken, and not hold out a hand to help ? The Psalmist says : ‘For my father and mother have left me, but the Lord hath taken me up.’¹ And the Prophet has said : ‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.’²

Every good and noble quality in man is but

¹ Ps. xxvi. 10.

² Isaias xlix. 15.

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a manifestation of a high, supreme, Divine attribute, and therefore, by a very instinct of nature, we look for a counterpart in God of the noble self-sacrifice which is so often seen in man. This expectation, on our part, is clearly encouraged by the words of *Isaias* quoted above.

This doctrine of Spiritualists is repugnant to the nature and common sense of Christians, leaving aside the manifold revelations which have been granted to us, and by which we have learned the infinite mercy and loving-kindness of God. 'For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son . . . that the world might be saved by Him.'¹

(3) And as to the resurrection, as taught by Spiritualists, we must necessarily repudiate it with scorn. The two suppositions of the spirits are untenable: the first, that the body of Christ was removed by the disciples surreptitiously, because that very idea is met in the gospel narrative, where we are told that the Pharisees offered money to the guards to invent and promulgate that story, so as to counteract the truth of the resurrection: and the second, that the risen body of Jesus was not the real, material body but an astral body,

¹ St. John iii. 16.

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because if there is one thing placed beyond all doubt in the gospel, it is the pains our Divine Lord took, during His forty days' sojourn on earth, to prove that the body in which His disciples beheld Him was the same body of flesh and bone which they had seen during the three years He had taught them and conversed with them. 'Why are you troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me to have.'¹ And when even then they feared, He said: 'Have you anything to eat? And they offered Him a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb, and He ate it.'² And to Thomas He said: 'Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands; and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing.'³

Here again, if we take the plain, common-sense meaning of our Lord's words and conduct, according to the teaching of the spirits, He is deliberately deceiving His disciples and us.

Now I think I have accomplished my task. In the first instruction I made my object clear,

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 39.

² *Idem*, 42.

³ St. John xx. 27.

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that, taking Christianity as that historical, traditional Christianity which has been universally accepted and received for two thousand years, it is absolutely incompatible and irreconcilable with Spiritualism. I have shown you sufficiently the Spiritualistic teaching on the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and it must be evident to you that the two are contradictory of one another. Consequently no Christian, who knows the treasure of faith he possesses as a follower and member of Christ, can enter upon Spiritualism with a clear conscience.

If this is the teaching that is met there you can well understand why the Church, in her zealous care for her children, warns the faithful so earnestly, and pronounces her censures upon all who have to do with it. And let no one say that no harm will come to them because they only take part in it through curiosity. What do we say to children when we see them playing with fire but that they will be burned? Have we not a saying that you cannot handle pitch without being soiled? The spirits wish nothing more than that you should begin from mere curiosity, for they know that the net will soon be drawn around you, when escape will be most unlikely.

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Let us not be disturbed, still less discouraged, by the fact that this evil is existing in our midst. Our Divine Lord has warned us of this very danger : ‘For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) the elect.’¹ The same warning has reached us from St. Paul : ‘Now the Spirit manifestly saith, that in the last times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to spirits of error, and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and having their conscience seared.’²

That we are justified in applying these warnings, and referring them to the teaching of the spirits, seems perfectly clear from the test given us by St. John. According to him, we are to test the spirits by their teaching concerning Jesus Christ, and by that test these spirits cannot be of God. ‘Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits if they be of God : because many false prophets are gone out into the world. By this is the Spirit of God known. Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God : *and every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God* : and this is Antichrist, of whom you

¹ St. Matt. xxiv. 24.

² 1 Timothy iv. 1.

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have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in the world.'¹ The spirits that deny the Divinity of Christ, His offices of Saviour, of Mediator, of Judge, and likewise the Resurrection, most certainly dissolve Christ. Therefore we know whence they are.

I would like to add one more word.

The Catholics who are listening to me, and perhaps even non-Catholics, have probably read the encyclical letter of Pius x, lately issued; or if they have not read the lengthy letter itself, they may have read one or other of the excellent summaries of the letter that have appeared in our Catholic papers.

If so, I think they cannot help being struck with the extraordinary similarity between the teaching of Modernism, condemned in that encyclical letter, and the teaching of Spiritualism.

(1) Among Modernists we find that the belief in Jesus Christ is so changed as to be no longer Christian. The real Christ, the historical Christ, was a mere man. The Divinity of Christ, the power by which He supported and proved His Divinity, His resurrection from the dead, are only external garments with which enthusiastic pious faith has clothed the Christ.

¹ 1 St. John iv. 1, *seq.*

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These were not realities but pious imaginings, which have been useful for a time in deepening the religious sense in the human soul, but must, in course of time, be stripped off and rejected.

That Spiritualism teaches the same concerning Christ is seen from Mr. Stainton-Moses, who writes in *Higher Aspects*: 'It is when we come to deal with the central figure in the gospel story that the divergence [between Christianity and Spiritualism] becomes more marked. The mysteriously incarnated God shades away into the divinest type of human nature. The Being like nothing man can reach—so infinitely high and lifted up above human nature—gives place to the *Very Man*, the highest realisation of man's possible; the actual living model which man may place before him for daily imitation. The God who lived amongst men gives place to the man who lived nearest God. We have lost a God-made man, but we have gained a model man, all but Divine. The loss is in the humanised God, the gain is in the God-like man.'

This places no difference between Jesus Christ and any simple man except in the degree of perfection obtained.

(2) Modernists teach that the Sacraments were not instituted by Christ, but, like all the

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attributes of dignity and power in Christ, have been evolved, in course of time, by His disciples, animated by the religious sense; and that Christ, acting in His disciples through this religious sense, may be said to be the author of the Sacraments.

Spiritualism likewise ridicules the Divine institution of the Sacraments, and scornfully rejects them. There is no grace to be conveyed; consequently no channels to convey it are needed.

(3) The Modernist calls into question the dogmas of the Christian religion—the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection. These, he asserts, are not unchangeable and unalterable. They are but counters and symbols of notions, which, as time rolls on, may be greatly changed, or become wholly obsolete and discarded.

So also Spiritualism asserts that these dogmas, 'which once for a restless age enshrined Divine truth, . . . are now a lifeless, dead formalism, from which we call man to a religion of spiritualised truth, to the lonely symbolism of angel teaching, to the higher planes of spirit, where the material finds no place, and the formal dogmatism of the past is for ever gone.'¹

¹ *Spirit Teaching*, p. 91.

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(4) Modernists teach that the Scriptures are not of Divine authorship, as taught in the Christian Church, but that they are the outcome of this religious sense, and are nothing more than the record of the religious experience of the individual writers. Consequently the Scriptures are placed on the same level as the sacred books of Buddhism, or any other religion.

So likewise Spiritualism asserts that the Scriptures are not of Divine authorship, and in fact, as we possess them, they are full of fables and allegories, which are of human origin, and that these so overlay the messages sent by God, that it is now impossible to discern the true from the false.

Considering this similarity of teaching, we may fairly claim that all the condemnations uttered by the Supreme Pontiff against the doctrine of Modernists fall likewise upon the doctrine and teaching of Spiritualism.



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